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SAF to lower training tempo to review safety, processes

Move, in wake of actor's death, will not affect operational readiness, says defence chief



Singaporean actor Aloysius Pang's manager Dasmond Koh (left) and elder brother Kenny Pang speaking to the media at Changi Airport yesterday. Mr Koh said a memorial service may be held for the late actor. ST PHOTO: KHALID BABA

Kor Kian Beng
Defence & Security Editor

The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) will, for the first time, lower its training tempo across all services, with the aim of giving commanders and troops the time and space to review the safety of its systems and processes.

The move is part of measures the military is taking after Singaporean actor Aloysius Pang died from injuries suffered during a military exercise in New Zealand.

Chief of Defence Force Melvyn Ong said at a media briefing yesterday that he had asked all services to review their training tempo and focus on the safety of all personnel, including full-time national servicemen and operationally ready national servicemen.

The change in tempo will involve lowering the duration, intensity and frequency of training, and include recalibrating some training activities for a more sustainable pace for greater focus on safety.

"So, all services will review this, lower their training tempo in the weeks ahead," added Lieutenant-General Ong. "This reduction of training tempo following the safety timeout will be enforced for as long as it takes for us to get it right. And we want to do it right, we want to do it safe for every activity, we want to do it right every time."

He said a reduced tempo would not affect SAF's operational readiness as it would not involve those on operations and deployments.

The death of Corporal First Class (NS) Pang is the fifth reported since September 2017, following four preceding years of zero training- and operations-related fatalities.

Lt-Gen Ong and Chief of Army Goh Si Hou, as well as other senior commanders, also shared the initial findings of the circumstances leading to the death of CFC Pang, 28, who was an NSman.

Major-General Goh said CFC Pang was with another technician and a gun detachment commander inside a Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer (SSPH) last Saturday.

The trio had been called in to diagnose a suspected fault in the gun. As part of the rectification process, the gun barrel had to be lowered to a standby position.

Maj-Gen Goh said when the barrel is lowered, cabin space would be reduced but is typically sufficient for artillery operators and technicians to operate within it. "What we found is that, unfortunately, he was unable to get out of the way of the barrel as it was lowered. He was caught between the end of the gun barrel and the interior of the SSPH, and he suffered crush injuries as a result," said Maj-Gen Goh.

NEED TO ENSURE SOLDIERS' SAFETY

I have told all my commanders that this cannot be business as usual. We are very sorry for every training death that happens in the SAF. I have told them that we must do better, that we must do our utmost to restore confidence in our training safety and to ensure the safety of all our soldiers.

CHIEF OF ARMY GOH SI HOU

The actor's lungs, heart and kidney were damaged, and he underwent three operations. His condition worsened on Wednesday and he was put on artificial life support, but died at 8.45pm that day.

Colonel Terry Tan, Commander of Combat Service Support Command, said CFC Pang was qualified and competent to carry out his work as an armament technician. He said CFC Pang had undergone refresher training when he reported for reservist duty. He had also undergone seven in-camp training stints.

The two other SAF personnel inside the howitzer were not injured.

When asked, the SAF commanders did not say whether any safety procedures had been breached in the incident. An independent Committee of Inquiry will be set up to investigate what happened.



CFC Aloysius Pang was with two other personnel inside a howitzer when he was injured last Saturday.

In its aftermath, Maj-Gen Goh said the army called for a safety pause in the artillery training in New Zealand and also for an immediate pause in all maintenance-related work and training, both in New Zealand and Singapore.

It has also called for an army-wide safety timeout to give units the time to review their safety processes and training tempo to reinforce safety procedures as well as drills in the field, he added.

Maj-Gen Goh said he held a safety call yesterday with 1,200 army commanders and trainers, and told them that the SAF needs to do better to restore confidence in its training safety.

"I have told all my commanders that this cannot be business as usual. We are very sorry for every training death that happens in the SAF. I have told them that we must do better, that we must do our utmost to restore confidence in our training safety and to ensure the safety of all our soldiers," he said.

Among those who paid tribute to CFC Pang yesterday were Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat and Workers' Party chief and opposition MP Pritam Singh.

There may be plans to hold a memorial service for the public to pay their respects, CFC Pang's manager Dasmond Koh said at the airport last night after returning from New Zealand with the actor's second elder brother Kenny Pang, 32.

kianbeng@sph.com.sg

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A6&8

Pahang ruler elected as Malaysia's new King

A keen athlete who holds positions at several sporting bodies was elected as Malaysia's new King yesterday.

The Sultan of Pahang, 59, will be the country's 16th constitutional monarch, replacing the Kelantan ruler who made a surprise decision to abdicate on Jan 6 after just two years on the throne.

A special meeting of the Conference of Rulers yesterday picked Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin (right) to reign for the next five years, under Malaysia's unique rotation system involving the nine Malay royal families. The meeting involved eight of the nine Malay rulers, including Sultan Abdullah himself.



The Kelantan ruler, Sultan Muhammad V, did not attend the meeting at the national palace.

Sultan Abdullah is a member of the council of world football governing body Fifa, president of the Asian Hockey Association and a former head of the Football Association of Malaysia. He is also a keen polo player.

He was installed as the new ruler of Pahang last week after his father Ahmad Shah, 88, stepped down due to declining health.

At the same meeting yesterday, Perak Sultan Nazrin Shah, 62, was again elected as the Deputy King.

Sultan Abdullah and his Deputy King will officially take up their posts next Thursday.

SEE WORLD A14

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10 must-reads for today

1 Goodbye to Tanglin Halt
After 34 years, Tanglin Halt Clinic bade a fond farewell to its home at the end of a row of shophouses at 39 Tanglin Halt Road. Dr Lily Neo, 65, general practitioner and MP of 22 years, is moving her clinic to a new location as the block will be demolished under the Selective En bloc Redevelopment Scheme. HOME B4



Dr Lily Neo speaking to software engineer Manju Somanathan (far left) and her daughter Keerti Arivazhagan, and other patients in her clinic. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

2 SAF to lower training tempo
To give commanders and troops the time and space to review the safety of its systems and processes, the Singapore Armed Forces will, for the first time, lower its training tempo across all services. This comes after the death of actor Aloysius Pang, who was injured in New Zealand during a military exercise. TOP OF THE NEWS A1

3 Rules for ride-hail services
The Land Transport Authority is proposing to license all street-hail and ride-hail operators, seeing them as providing "the same fundamental service of transporting commuters from point to point". This is a change from six years ago, when the LTA viewed the newcomers as "tech companies". TOP OF THE NEWS A4

4 Congress boosted by debut
India's opposition Congress party has enthused its rank and file, three months shy of the country's general election, with the formal political debut of Mrs Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, say analysts. But the member of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty will have her work cut out for her organising Congress' charge in the key state of Uttar Pradesh. WORLD A18

5 Kim upbeat after letter
North Korean leader Kim Jong Un expressed "great satisfaction" after receiving a letter from United States President Donald Trump ahead of a second summit between the two, Pyongyang's state media reported yesterday. WORLD A19

6 Huawei weathers pressure
Growing political pressure from some Western countries has failed to dampen Huawei's business, a senior executive of the Chinese tech giant said. The world's biggest producer of telecommunications equipment said its consumer business grew around 50 per cent last year to US$52 billion (S$71 billion), with 206 million smartphones shipped. WORLD A20

7 Jordan's balancing act
Caught in a troubled neighbourhood, Jordan has to balance its domestic and regional priorities with close ties to Washington, says associate editor Ravi Velloor (below). OPINION A24



8 CNY demand driving prices
Prices of bak kwa are starting to creep up with less than two weeks before Chinese New Year, and queues can be seen forming outside popular outlets selling the barbecued meat. But despite recent disruptions in the import of live pigs from Indonesia, raw pork and bak kwa sellers say supply and prices have not been much impacted. HOME B1

9 Tough times for telcos
Singapore telcos will be compelled to consolidate over the next three years due to an increasingly crowded market, according to a forecast from financial services company Moody's. This comes amid the arrival of a fourth telco. BUSINESS C1

10 Nadal in ferocious form
Rafael Nadal (below) is in one of his murderous moods, writes Rohit Brijnath at the Australian Open.

Everyone who has played him carries a scar. It was Stefanos Tsitsipas' turn last night; he won only six games as he lost the men's singles semi-final 6-2, 6-4, 6-0. SPORT C8



PHOTO: EPA-EFE

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VIDEO
Hangout with ST
Multimedia journalists Alyssa Woo and Hairianto Diman talk about the late actor Aloysius Pang, the Central Provident Fund's Retirement Sum Scheme payout and hardcore BTS fans. http://str.sg/hangout48



WEB SPECIAL
More about Dyson
British home appliance manufacturer Dyson says it will be moving its head office to Singapore. Here are five things to know about the tech giant and its billionaire founder. http://str.sg/dyson

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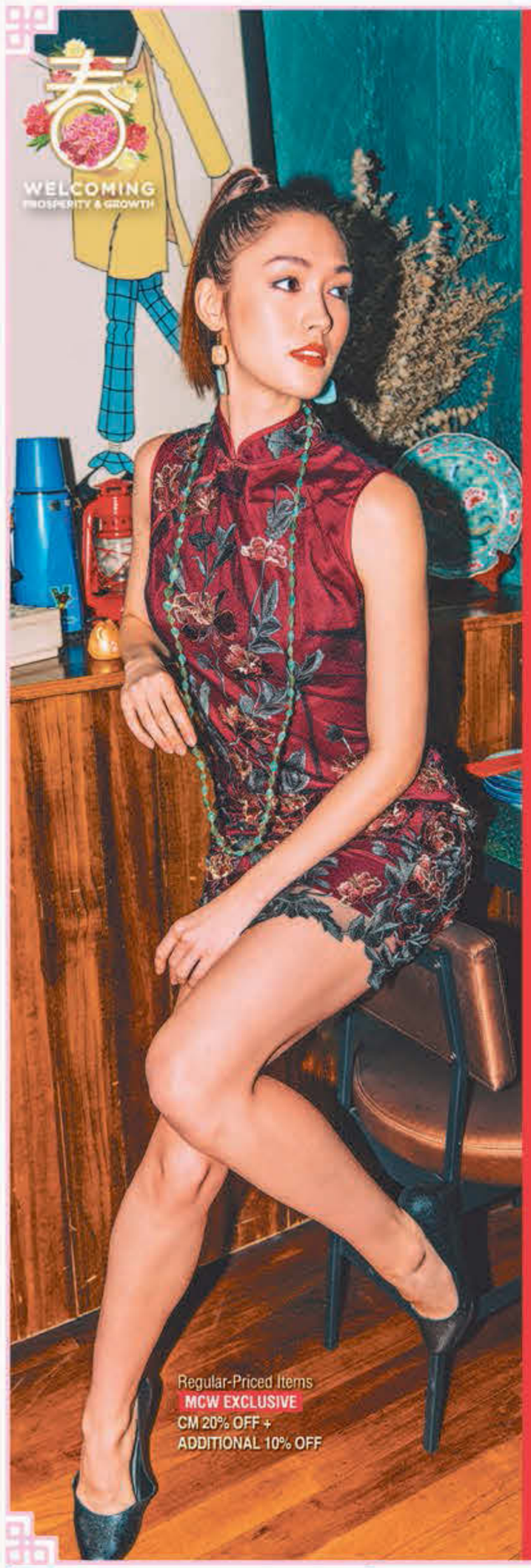
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LTA aims to streamline rules for taxi firms, private-hire cars

Licensing all such operators expected to create more level playing field, say observers

Christopher Tan
Senior Transport Correspondent

A long-awaited move to impose tighter regulations on private-hire operators is round the corner.

The Land Transport Authority (LTA) said yesterday that it is proposing to license all street-hail and ride-hail operators "as they provide the same fundamental service of transporting commuters from point to point".

This is a stark change from the time when these newcomers arrived six years ago, when the authority viewed them as "tech companies" and not transport providers.

The LTA said yesterday that regulations will also cover companies which provide pre-booked chauffeured services.

Observers expect changes to harmonise regulations governing taxis and private-hire players, and create a more level playing field.

The LTA noted that the change will be "different from today's regulatory framework, where one set of regulations apply to taxi operators which provide both street-hail and ride-hail services, and there are no uniform regulations that apply to operators that purely provide ride-hail services".

It said a new regulatory framework "will replace the existing Taxi Service Operator Licence and Third Party Booking Registration Certificate".

The LTA is also looking to improve safety, but gave no details on how it will do this. Preliminary data from motor insurers indicates that road accident rates have crept up since the debut of private-hire firms.

On the commercial side, the new regulatory framework will allow drivers freedom to drive for whoever they wish. It will "allow LTA to prohibit all operators from having driver exclusivity arrangements", the authority added.

The Straits Times understands that the Public Transport Council (PTC) will eventually see that both taxi and private-hire companies adhere to the new regulations. When asked, the PTC said it was more appropriate for the LTA to reply.

An LTA spokesman would not comment, merely saying that "more details on the review will be made available when ready".

The LTA is seeking public feedback on the proposed changes.

Those who wish to have their say can do so via http://bit.ly/PCDP2P, or they can send an e-mail to p2p_consultation@lta.gov.sg by Feb 21.

Industry players have long highlighted the stark differences between taxis and private-hire operators such as Grab and Gojek.

These include differences pertaining to the driver's age, controlled fleet sizes, a passenger's legal recourse in the case of accidents, prescribed service standards and fares.

Ms Tammy Tan, spokesman for ComfortDelGro, the largest cab operator here, said: "We welcome any proposals which will ensure not only a sustainable and fair competitive environment for the entire point-to-point sector, but also a safe one.

"We will, however, have to balance these with operational viability. We will be examining the proposals closely and will submit our comments by the end of the public consultation period."

Singapore University of Social Sciences' transport economist Walter Theseira said regulators should not assume that the ideal market is a competitive one. "This may be a natural monopoly if returns to scale are large enough," he said.

He added that "all personal point-to-point services should be considered in the same market... all should be regulated similarly".

"I have some reservations about the race to the bottom in regulation, primarily due to safety concerns, so it may be the case that private-hire needs to be regulated up," he added.

To ensure that new regulations are adhered to, Dr Theseira said the authorities need "a much tighter hand... on data and operations from the market players".

For instance, no one except Grab knows how many rides the hailing firm caters to a day.

christan@sph.com.sg



The Land Transport Authority said that it is proposing to license all street-hail and ride-hail operators "as they provide the same fundamental service of transporting commuters from point to point". ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH

Car COE numbers to drop 9.6% for Feb to April

There will be fewer certificates of entitlement (COEs) for the next three months starting from February.

The Land Transport Authority said yesterday that the supply of Category A COEs (cars up to 1,600cc and 130bhp) will shrink by 9.1 per cent to 3,300 a month.

Category B (cars above 1,600cc or 130bhp) will have 2.9 per cent fewer certificates at 2,399 a month.

The Open category (for all vehicles except motorcycles but which ends up mostly for bigger cars) will have 26.4 per cent fewer COEs at 794 a month.

In all, car buyers and sellers will see their collective supply (including the Open category) shrink by 9.6 per cent to 6,493 pieces a month. Those buying or selling bigger models will see a bigger shrinkage of 10.1 per cent.

Commercial vehicle buyers and sellers will have 7.6 per cent fewer COEs at 608 per month.

Meanwhile, motorcyclists will see a 25.2 per cent plunge in their COE supply to 1,651 pieces a month.

In total, the monthly supply of 8,752 is 12.9 per cent smaller than the November-January quota.

Although some motor traders baulk at the prospect of a smaller quota, Mr Ron Lim, head of sales and marketing at Nissan agent Tan Chong Motor, said its impact on car prices may not be significant.

"Category A is now basically back to what it was in the August-October 2018 period," he said. "Back then, the COE, at its lowest, was $25,556. So, unless buying sentiment picks up strongly, I doubt Category A COEs will see much fluctuation."

But he noted the impact on those who buy and sell bigger cars may be more significant, as the shrinkage in their pool was more than expected – mainly because of the 26.4 per cent plunge in the Open quota.

Even so, "a lot depends on whether demand can be sustained, especially whether Gojek's buying is over", he said, referring to the new private-hire firm's arrival fuelling demand for cars. "If Gojek's buying is over, then again we might not see much fluctuation in Category B and Open category prices," he added.

Motor traders are likely to gauge how customers react to news of the reduced quota before adjusting car prices, but Mr Lim said that "based on past experience, especially during the Chinese New Year tender period", most customers will not rush in. "Fundamental buying sentiment still remains relatively weak," he noted, adding it will be this, rather than COE supply numbers, that will have a bigger impact on prices.

Industry observers said Gojek is looking to build an initial fleet of 2,000 cars. Even if the company staggers buying over five or 10 months, it will exert upward pressure on COE premiums.

Christopher Tan

Average monthly COE supply

	Cars up to 1,600cc and 130bhp	Cars above 1,600cc or 130bhp	Commercial vehicles	Motorcycles	Open	Total
Feb to April 2019	3,300	2,399	608	1,651	794	**8,752**
Nov 2018 to Jan 2019	3,631	2,471	658	2,207	1,079	**10,046**

Source: LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS



Senior Counsel Davinder Singh, 61, will be joined by Drew & Napier directors Jaikanth Shankar and Pardeep Singh Khosa. The new firm's name has not been revealed. ST FILE PHOTO

Top litigator Davinder Singh leaving Drew & Napier to set up own firm

Selina Lum
Law Correspondent

Top litigator Senior Counsel Davinder Singh is leaving Drew & Napier after 37 years.

The firm and Mr Singh, 61, announced yesterday that he has decided to leave the firm to start his own practice and to train young lawyers. The new firm's name has not been revealed.

Mr Singh will be joined by Drew & Napier directors Jaikanth Shankar and Pardeep Singh Khosa.

Two years ago, as chief executive officer, and without being asked, he initiated the leadership renewal process and appointed a new CEO, according to the announcement.

He was asked to stay on as executive chairman with no retirement age.

"Renewal in the commercial world cannot meaningfully take place under a shadow. If you train the young to take over, you must trust them to do so," said Mr Singh.

"I have overseen the transition and am convinced that the new team is ready and the firm is in capable hands. I therefore believe that it is the right thing to do to move on. I am also very blessed to be able to do that at a time of my choosing."

TIME TO MOVE ON

> **I have overseen the transition and am convinced that the new team is ready and the firm is in capable hands. I therefore believe that it is the right thing to do to move on.**
>
> **SENIOR COUNSEL DAVINDER SINGH**

Senior Counsel Cavinder Bull, who was appointed CEO in August 2017, will continue in the role, assisted by deputy CEO Sushil Nair.

Mr Bull expressed the firm's gratitude to Mr Singh, Mr Shankar and Mr Khosa. "They will always count as our closest and dearest friends, and we wish them the very best in the next stage of their careers," he said.

Senior Counsel Jimmy Yim will assume the role of chairman of the board while continuing as the managing director of the dispute resolution department of the firm.

Mr Singh, who was in the pioneer batch of senior counsel appointed in 1997, is widely considered Singapore's top litigator.

He was once described by Asia Pacific Legal 500 as being "without peer at the bar".

In 2014, he received the award for Outstanding Contribution to the Legal Profession from Chambers & Partners, an international award given to individuals for their exceptional achievements and significant impact on their market.

At the inaugural The Asian Lawyer Emerging Markets Awards 2014, he was named "Disputes Lawyer of the Year" for South-east Asia and India. The publication described him as one "who is feared in Singapore as the city's most powerful litigator".

Last year, he was named Dispute Resolution Lawyer of the Year by Asian Legal Business.

Closer to home, Mr Singh is known for representing founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew and scoring court victories against opposition politicians Tang Liang Hong and Chee Soon Juan and foreign media outlets such as The Economist, Bloomberg and The New York Times.

He represented Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in a defamation lawsuit against blogger Roy Ngerng for suggesting that PM Lee had misappropriated Central Provident Fund savings. During a hearing to assess the amount of damages he has to pay PM Lee, Mr Ngerng broke down while he was being cross-examined by Mr Singh.

Mr Singh also defended Singapore Press Holdings in a lawsuit brought against the newspaper publisher by Mr T.T. Durai, then CEO of the National Kidney Foundation, for defamation in an article that said he had a gold-plated tap installed in his office.

Mr Durai threw in the towel on the second day of the trial.

Recently, Mr Singh represented Pasir Ris-Punggol Town Council in the lawsuit against three Workers' Party MPs and two other Aljunied-Hougang town councillors for alleged breaches of fiduciary duties. A court decision is pending.

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SAF to study how to make further safety improvements

Kor Kian Beng
Defence & Security Editor



From left: Chief of Army Goh Si Hou, Chief of Defence Force Melvyn Ong, Commander CSSCOM (Combat Service Support Command) Terry Tan and Chief Army Medical Officer Edward Lo Hong Yee at a media conference yesterday on the death of Corporal First Class (NS) Aloysius Pang. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

The state of the Singapore Armed Forces' (SAF) safety system is in a better place after implementing recommendations from various external panels, but there is still room for improvement. Lowering the training tempo is the first step towards this, said Chief of Defence Force Melvyn Ong.

He pointed out how the SAF has studied findings and implemented recommendations from experts on ways to improve the safety system in various areas, including heat injury and vehicular safety, following training incidents.

Also, he said the External Review Panel on SAF Safety – tasked to oversee safety procedures and review the systems – has consistently ascertained that the safety systems are in place.

But going forward, the SAF will seek to do better by lowering its training tempo, with the services tasked to review and report on whether the pace of operations is "too fast, too intense, too frequent", said Lieutenant-General Ong.

Based on their input, the SAF will do a dedicated review of the training tempo and take a look at it holistically within each service so that they can do things well, do things safely, he added.

"And I believe that once we lower the training tempo, it will give us more time to ascertain the optimum level of activity, the right emphasis and the right training activity level, I think this will put us in a better state," said Lt-Gen Ong.

Asked if the move – the first time that the SAF is doing this across all services – reflects that the training tempo has been too intense and if it has received any such feedback, Lt-Gen Ong said this would be part of the review by the services.

He was responding to questions on public concerns over SAF safety, following Corporal First Class (NS) Aloysius Pang's death, which was its fifth fatal incident involving training or operations since September 2017.

Then, Third Sergeant Gavin Chan, 21, died in an exercise in Australia after a Bionix tank he was commanding overturned on a steep embankment.

In April last year, CFC Dave Lee, 19, died of heat injuries following an 8km fast march.

In October last year, regular serviceman – Third Warrant Officer Muhammad Sadikin Hasban, 33, an assistant chief company trainer – died in Brunei after he was hit by a falling tree branch at a helicopter evacuation site.

Last November, CFC Liu Kai, 22, died after a Bionix armoured vehicle reversed into a Land Rover he was driving as part of a field training exercise in the Jalan Murai training area.

Asked what he would say to parents concerned about their children in national service, Lt-Gen Ong said: "Our parents come to the BMT (basic military training) graduation parade and I see the pride in their eyes when they see their children grow in national service. Parents are proud of their children serving national service.

"But on the other hand, it is our responsibility to ensure the safety of their children. Now, we must ensure that parents are assured. To the parents, I will say this: That as a system, the SAF has put in place a good system."

Lt-Gen Ong was also asked why the information flow over the incident and the extent of CFC Pang's injuries had come in dribs and drabs.

For instance, the incident first came to light when the Ministry of Defence (Mindef) revealed on Sunday that CFC Pang had suffered injuries while carrying out repair work inside the Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer, but did not release details.

On Wednesday, Mindef said the actor was inside the howitzer with two other SAF personnel, and that he was injured when the gun barrel was lowered.

Yesterday, it was revealed that CFC Pang was caught between the end of the gun barrel and the interior of the SSPH, and suffered crush injuries as a result.

Lt-Gen Ong said the SAF has been trying to be as proactive as possible in the information it could release, though there were certain things it could not reveal.

"But I think we have done as much as we can to be as proactive," he said, adding that the focus had also been on supporting the family.

kianbeng@sph.com.sg

SCAN TO WATCH Chief of Defence Force: We can do better. http://str.sg/army

Actor caught between end of howitzer barrel and cabin interior

Aloysius Pang was unable to get out of the way as gun barrel was lowered, leading to injuries

Lim Min Zhang

While on an overseas live-firing exercise last week, Corporal First Class (NS) Aloysius Pang was part of a team that was called in to diagnose a suspected fault in the Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer (SSPH).

Before the diagnosis could begin, the gun barrel had to be lowered to a neutral position, which left CFC (NS) Pang caught between the end of the barrel and the interior of the SSPH.

This caused the serious chest and abdominal injuries that led to the Singaporean actor's death on Wednesday.

Yesterday, at the Ministry of Defence in Bukit Gombak, Chief of Army Goh Si Hou gave these initial findings into the incident that happened last Saturday during the annual Exercise Thunder Warrior in New Zealand.

He said: "When the gun barrel is lowered in the SSPH, the space in the cabin is reduced. However, it is typically sufficient for artillery operators as well as our technicians to be able to operate within this cabin.

"What we found is that, unfortunately, (CFC Pang) was unable to get out of the way of the barrel as it was lowered."

Two other servicemen – another technician and a gun detachment commander – who were in the SSPH's cabin with CFC Pang were uninjured, said Major-General Goh.

CFC Pang's formation chief, Colonel Terry Tan, told reporters that the lowering of the gun barrel is done within the cabin, and a "check clear" procedure needs to be followed whenever the barrel is lowered.

The barrel, which can be lowered manually or automatically with the press of a button, had to be lowered for diagnosis to be performed. In CFC Pang's case, the lowering was automatic, he said.

On average, this movement can take about nine to 10 seconds.

When such a repair needs to be done, the howitzer's operator and the technician will first discuss, as part of standard operating procedure. After that, a verbal warning and visual check of the cabin is conducted before the button is pressed to lower the barrel, said Col Tan.

It is also part of protocol to lower the gun to a standby position – a neutral position for the gun barrel – in order for the technician to diagnose the fault.

When asked who has the authority to lower the gun, and if any lapses have been discovered so far, Maj-Gen Goh said that this was a matter that would be part of the ongoing investigations.

The army chief added that, at this point in time, they were not aware of anything that could have impeded the movement to get out of the way of the barrel.

CFC Pang, 28, was an armament technician from the 268th Battalion Singapore Artillery who was trained to perform maintenance and repair for the SSPH.

The operationally ready national serviceman (NSman) was part of the forward maintenance platoon, which is activated to diagnose a fault when an operator detects one.

"If it is beyond the competency of the forward maintenance platoon, they will ask the regular technicians, who are positioned behind, to come forward to diagnose the fault," said Col Tan, who is Commander of the Combat Service Support Command.

He added that CFC Pang was qualified and competent to do his job in the exercise, and it was not his first time maintaining the SSPH.

"In fact, this was his seventh in-camp training. He had done five high-key and low-key (trainings). Prior to Exercise Thunder Warrior, he had attended maintenance vocational and refresher training. In fact, when he landed in New Zealand, he was given just-in-time refresher training before training started," he said.

CFC Pang died on Wednesday at 8.45pm despite attempts to repair his damaged organs through surgery and putting him on artificial life support.

He underwent three operations at Waikato Hospital, which is a regional trauma centre that handles a high volume of such cases.

The army has operated the SSPH for the last 15 years without any serious injury, said Maj-Gen Goh, adding that an immediate pause on all maintenance-related work and training in both Singapore and New Zealand was called.

He added that Mindef has also convened an independent Committee of Inquiry to look into the circumstances leading to the incident, and the cause of CFC Pang's serious injury.

Chief of Defence Force Melvyn Ong said that the Singapore Armed Forces remains committed to the safety of all its soldiers.

"I see thousands of NSFs (full-time national servicemen) and NSmen on a regular basis. We engage them on their training. They are training every day to ensure a safe and secure Singapore... They are proud of what they do. It is a responsibility that they don't wear lightly on their sleeve," he said.

"And we have worked hard over the last couple of months, learnt from each incident and put in place better procedures, measures, practices. But we can do better."

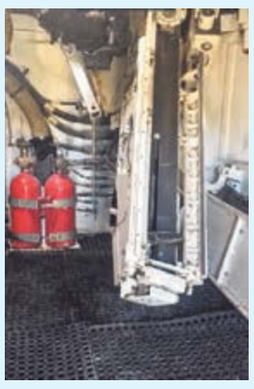
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What happened to Aloysius Pang



Initial findings given by Chief of Army Goh Si Hou showed that Corporal First Class (NS) Aloysius Pang was unable to get out of the way as the gun barrel of the Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer was lowered. He had been called in to diagnose a suspected fault in the gun during a live-firing exercise in New Zealand last Saturday.

A Gun in raised position

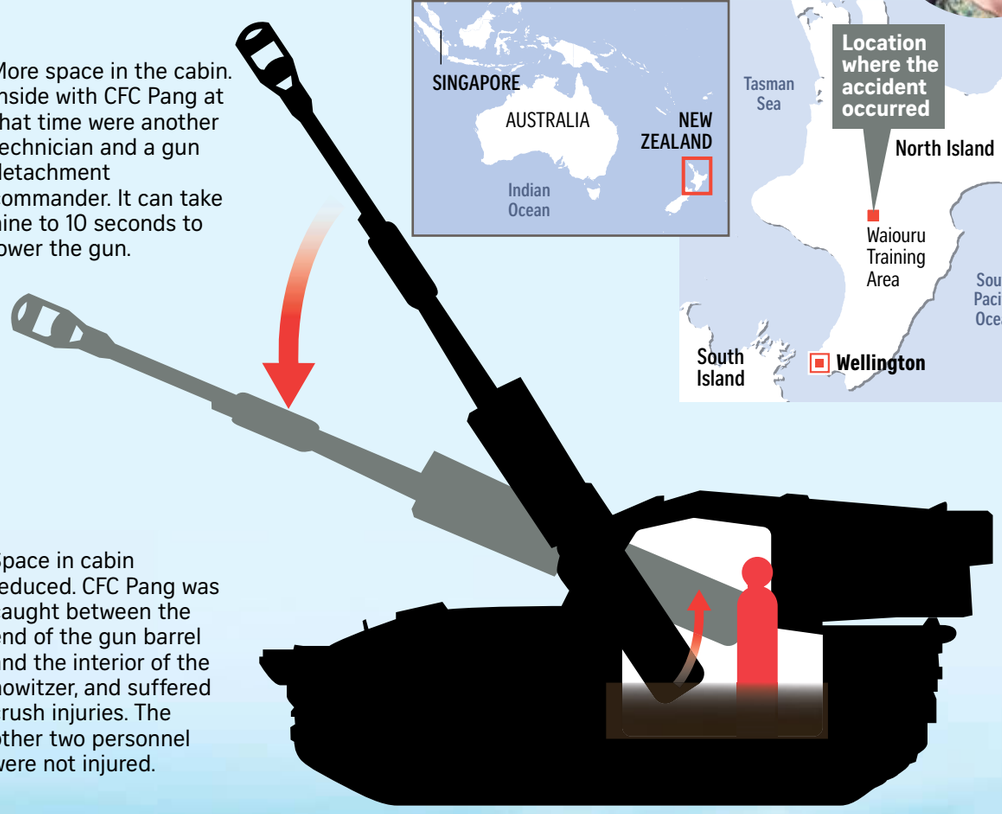


More space in the cabin. Inside with CFC Pang at that time were another technician and a gun detachment commander. It can take nine to 10 seconds to lower the gun.

B Gun in standby /neutral position



Space in cabin reduced. CFC Pang was caught between the end of the gun barrel and the interior of the howitzer, and suffered crush injuries. The other two personnel were not injured.





Singapore Armed Forces conducting a live artillery firing exercise in Waiouru, New Zealand.

Source: MINDEF PHOTOS: MINDEF, FACEBOOK STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

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Public memorial service may be held for Aloysius Pang

This is so that all of his fans and loved ones can say goodbye, says actor's talent manager

Yip Wai Yee
Entertainment Correspondent

A public memorial service is being considered for home-grown actor Aloysius Pang, who was viewed as the precious one in his family.

Speaking to the media last night after arriving in Singapore from New Zealand, the actor's elder brother Kenny said:

"He is the youngest, he is the most loved... we called him *xiao gua tou* (little melon head). And what you see on television and what you see in all the responses that he has been receiving – all the love and care – that is who he is.

"He is as caring, he is as devoted to his passion, so that is the true self of Aloysius. I think his main priority has always been his parents, his love for his parents, and that has not changed."

Mr Kenny Pang was accompanied by his younger brother's talent manager Dasmond Koh, 46, at Changi Airport to meet the media to address questions surrounding the actor's death in New Zealand.

They declined to say whether the parents and eldest brother have since returned to Singapore.

Mr Koh said there may be plans to hold a memorial service for the actor so that "all of his fans and loved ones can say goodbye".

Corporal First Class (NS) Pang, 28, died on Wednesday night from injuries suffered last Saturday while serving as an operationally ready national serviceman.

He was with the 268th Battalion Singapore Artillery, and had been carrying out repair works inside a Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer when the gun barrel was lowered, injuring him in the chest and abdominal areas.

Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen said the SAF is fully assisting the family and that the Republic of Singapore Air Force's KC-135 has been sent to New Zealand to repatriate CFC Pang's body.

He was evacuated to Waikato Hospital, a regional trauma centre in Hamilton, south of Auckland, where he underwent three operations in five days.

During the 15-minute meeting with the press, Mr Koh was visibly upset and choked up several times, while Mr Kenny Pang appeared calmer.

When asked if the family is looking for more answers about the accident from the authorities, Mr Pang said: "I didn't get a chance to look at my phone or to get any of the latest updates, but I will let Mindef communicate with us directly."

He added: "We must be thankful that Mindef has been aiding us in any way they can, with all the arrangements and all the liaising to get us to meet Aloysius as soon as possible."

The Ministry of Defence had arranged for the actor's mother to fly to New Zealand on Sunday morning, and she spoke to him that night. The father and two elder brothers joined them from the next day onwards.

Mr Kenny Pang said he did not manage to speak to his brother by the time he arrived.

"I didn't manage to meet him awake. We didn't get that opportunity," he said, adding that he has been feeling a lot of "ups and downs" in the past few days.

At a press conference held by Mindef yesterday afternoon, Chief Army Medical Officer Edward Lo Hong Yee said CFC Pang was treated on site by the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) doctor and his team before he was evacuated to the hospital. Dr Teo Li Tserng, chief of trauma and acute care surgery at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, was later flown in to assist the medical team in New Zealand.

Colonel (Dr) Lo said at the press conference that he was told by Dr Teo and the New Zealand medical team after the second operation that they were already expecting complications.

"We cannot have such a severely injured patient and not expect complications. So, they were already expecting complications. They just didn't know when it would set in," added Col Lo. "So, when he started to deteriorate, they knew that complications had started and that is when the third surgery happened. And subsequently, he was put on artificial life support."

In a Facebook post yesterday night, Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen said the SAF was fully assisting the family and that the Republic of Singapore Air Force's KC-135 has been sent to New Zealand to repatriate CFC Pang's body.

"Our grief counsellors are on the ground to comfort the family. But I know that no words or deeds can relieve their sorrow or replace their loss. I hope and pray that the passage of time will bring them some comfort," he added.

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ENDURING LOVE

I did not have the fortune of being your wife in this lifetime. We must definitely get married in the next. I love you, I really love you. Thank you for taking care of me all these years. I love you forever.

ACTRESS JAYLEY WOO

BELOVED BROTHER

He is the youngest, he is the most loved... We called him xiao gua tou (little melon head). And what you see on television and what you see in all the responses that he has been receiving – all the love and care – that is who he is.

MR KENNY PANG, actor Aloysius Pang's elder brother.

STRENGTH IN A DIFFICULT TIME

It is with a very heavy heart that I think of the sorrow you are going through. My family and I, together with many fellow Singaporeans, wish you all strength in this difficult time.

FINANCE MINISTER HENG SWEE KEAT, offering his condolences to Corporal First Class (NS) Pang's family and loved ones.



Actor Aloysius Pang and his girlfriend, actress Jayley Woo, had been waiting until they got married to go public with their romance, Ms Woo revealed. Before this, they had not publicly acknowledged that they were dating. PHOTOS: ALOYPANG/INSTAGRAM

Actress girlfriend, colleagues, public figures mourn actor's death



Ng Huiwen, Tee Zhuo, Lim Min Zhang and Yip Wai Yee

Actress Jayley Woo bade an emotional farewell to her boyfriend, actor Aloysius Pang, in a series of heart-rending Instagram posts overnight, shortly after the Ministry of Defence issued a statement on Wednesday night confirming his death.

In an Instagram post close to midnight, the 27-year-old Ms Woo wrote in Chinese: "Aug 24 is your birthday, Jan 4 is a special day of ours, and on Jan 24 you left me without a word. All that is left are your cold and hard hands."

One of the photos in the post shows her holding Mr Pang's hand in the hospital.

"Why is it such a coincidence that my favourite number is four? Why have you heartlessly left me behind? How could you bear to leave this world? Why do you treat me this way?" Ms Woo said.

"I did not have the fortune of being your wife in this lifetime. We must definitely get married in the next. I love you, I really love you. Thank you for taking care of me all these years. I love you forever. Please leave in peace. Appear in my dreams often, understand? Also, I will never forgive you in this lifetime."

Ms Woo made several Instagram posts early yesterday morning revealing details about her relationship with Mr Pang for the first time, saying that they had been waiting until they got married to go public with their romance.

Before this, Ms Woo and Mr Pang had not publicly acknowledged that they were dating, though they had been spotted together a couple of times. The pair starred opposite each other in two Mediacorp Channel 8 drama series, Tiger Mum and Super Senior, in 2015.

They also appeared in another drama in 2017, Dream Coder.

"You will always be a part of me, my man. Till death do us part, baby boy." She added in a Chinese hashtag: "My world is gone."

Several of Mr Pang's fellow artists also paid tribute. Actor Shane Pow wrote on Instagram: "It wasn't enough being brothers with you this life. Let's be brothers again next life. I love you, my big brother."

Mediacorp actor Desmond Tan commented on Mr Pang's Instagram: "Bro, you are an important chapter in all our lives. Nothing is wrong, just that you went ahead of us like you always do as a human and actor. We will see you in future."

Actress Carrie Wong said: "I always say to you, 'Why is it you again?', but really, I want to say, it was my good fortune to have worked with you so many times. Thank you for always bringing sunshine to others. Always remember you. I will see you next time."

Apart from those in the entertainment business, several public figures also offered their condolences to the late Mr Pang's family and friends.

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat, who is in Davos attending the World Economic Forum, offered his deepest condolences to Corporal First Class (NS) Pang's family and loved ones. "It is with a very heavy heart that I think of the sorrow you are going through. My family and I, together with many fellow Singaporeans, wish you all strength in this difficult time," he wrote on Facebook yesterday.

Workers' Party chief Pritam Singh shared that he was writing from national service in-camp training, saying that he has been "anxious and worried", like many Singaporeans.

"Having been in uniform for the last four days, the news of his death last night is more acute, with the loss of a fellow NSman hitting closer to home," he said in a Facebook post yesterday morning.

Mr Singh said that NS training has become more focused over the years, noting improvements in food quality, safety and balance with realistic training, and equipment.

"In spite of the changes, one thing remains constant. That sense of camaraderie – regardless of rank, race or religion when we swop our civvies for uniform, even if it is only for a few weeks a year," he added.

"Rest in peace, Aloysius Pang. Like all NSmen and NSF personnel who have passed on while on duty, we pray for strength for their families and loved ones through difficult times. And we stand with them."

Others who posted included Dr Mohamad Maliki Osman, Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs; Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu; Ms Sun Xueling, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs and National Development; and MP Zainal Sapari. The Singapore Democratic Party and Singapore People's Party also offered their condolences.

nghuiwen@sph.com.sg
teezhuo@sph.com.sg
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Sampan ahoy! i Light festival sets sail next week



A holographic boat "docked" at Marina Bay is one of 33 artworks that will go on display from next week as part of the upcoming festival i Light Singapore – Bicentennial Edition.

Sails Aloft, created by the Estonia-based Biangle Studio, was inspired by the sampan panjang (long dwelling boat) used by the Orang Laut sea nomads, as well as its racing boat variations.

The public will be able to see it from The Promontory and Mist Walk near the Marina Bay waterfront.

The annual i Light festival runs from Monday to Feb 24.

The sustainable light art festival, previously known as i Light Marina Bay, has been organised by the Urban Redevelopment Authority since 2010 to add vibrancy to the Marina Bay precinct and encourage sustainable lifestyles.

Among the 33 artworks – by artists from 15 countries – that will go on display are light art installations and a multimedia show.

The festival is part of the islandwide bicentennial activities commemorating the 200th anniversary of the arrival of Sir Stamford Raffles. It will expand beyond the usual Marina Bay area to include the Civic District, Singapore River and Raffles Terrace at Fort Canning Park.
ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

SEE HOME B6

S'pore, China to set up mediators' panel for Belt and Road projects

Experienced professionals from countries involved in initiative will help settle disputes in tune with Asian values

Tan Dawn Wei
China Bureau Chief
In Beijing

Singapore and China have agreed to set up a panel of international mediators that will help resolve disputes arising from projects under China's Belt and Road Initiative.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed yesterday at the first China-Singapore International Commercial Dispute Resolution Conference, which gathered 300 government officials, lawyers and academics from both sides to discuss trends and developments in international arbitration.

The panel will comprise experienced mediation professionals from China, Singapore and other countries involved in Belt and Road projects, who will familiarise themselves with the various jurisdictions.

In his opening speech at the conference, Senior Minister of State for Law and Health Edwin Tong said Singapore and China can jointly develop a "new way of settling cross-border commercial disputes that better reflects Asian values and is also tailored to Asia's needs".

As Asia's economies rise, so too will the need for legal services, especially those that will suit the region rather than bear Western norms and values.

Mr Tong later told reporters that both sides are working on the specifics of this legal collaboration, but the choice of arbitrators and the set of rules used will be "a lot more tuned to how Asians might want to do business and, more importantly, how Asians might resolve disputes".

The MOU, signed by the Singapore International Mediation Centre and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, will see the two organisations jointly develop rules, case management protocols and enforcement procedures to handle dispute cases.

Singapore was an early supporter of the Belt and Road Initiative, an ambitious development strategy by Chinese President Xi Jinping to revive ancient land and sea trade routes linking Europe, Africa and Asia.

Infrastructural projects, from building ports and industrial hubs to railways and roads, are already under way in many of the countries along the routes.

Singapore is tapping into this mega enterprise in four ways. One is through the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative, an inter-governmental project that aims to improve transport and trade links with China's less developed western region. Another is through developing joint projects with China in other countries that are part of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Singapore is also offering financial and dispute resolution services to companies and institutions on Belt and Road projects.

Mr Tong said Singapore hopes to leverage its reputation for having a strong rule of law, a good system of resolution and for impartiality.

dawntan@sph.com.sg

China holding Aussie writer for suspected spying, says his lawyer

BEIJING/SYDNEY • The Chinese authorities are holding an Australian writer, who used to be a Chinese citizen, on suspicion of endangering state security, China said yesterday, and his lawyer said he was suspected of espionage.

Australian officials said Mr Yang Hengjun was detained shortly after he flew in to the southern city of Guangzhou from New York last week, but they did not believe his detention was the result of rising tension between China and the West.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hua Chunying said Australia was officially notified after Mr Yang was placed under "coercive measures" – a euphemism for detention – in Beijing.

"The Australian citizen Yang Jun, due to being suspected of engaging in criminal acts that endangered China's national security, was recently placed under coercive measures and is being investigated by the Beijing city State Security Bureau," Ms Hua told reporters, using a slightly different name for him.

Mr Yang's rights and interests were being protected in accordance with the law, she told a regular news briefing in Beijing.

Australian Defence Minister Christopher Pyne, who arrived in Beijing yesterday for scheduled talks, said Australia would normally expect to be told of such a case within three days under existing diplomatic conventions.

Mr Yang went missing last Friday, and Australia was not told until four days later.

Mr Pyne said the late notification was disappointing, and he would be raising it in his talks with Chinese officials. "He is being held in residential surveillance," Mr Pyne told reporters.

The Australian government was first alerted that Mr Yang had gone missing after friends said he had been out of contact for several days.

Mr Yang was previously a Chinese foreign affairs official in Beijing before becoming an Australian citizen and a novelist, The Australian newspaper said on Wednesday.

Mr Yang's lawyer, Mr Mo Shaoping, told Reuters that his client was suspected of espionage and was being held under "residential surveillance at a designated location".

The special detention measure allows the authorities to interrogate suspects for six months without necessarily granting access to legal representation. Rights groups say that the lack of oversight raises concern about abuse by interrogators.

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne said staff from the Australian Embassy met Chinese officials yesterday and, while details were limited, she said there was no evidence Mr Yang's case was linked to Australia's criticism of China's detention of two Canadians on suspicion of endangering state security. REUTERS



Mr Yang Hengjun, who used to be a Chinese citizen, was detained shortly after he flew in to Guangzhou from New York last week.

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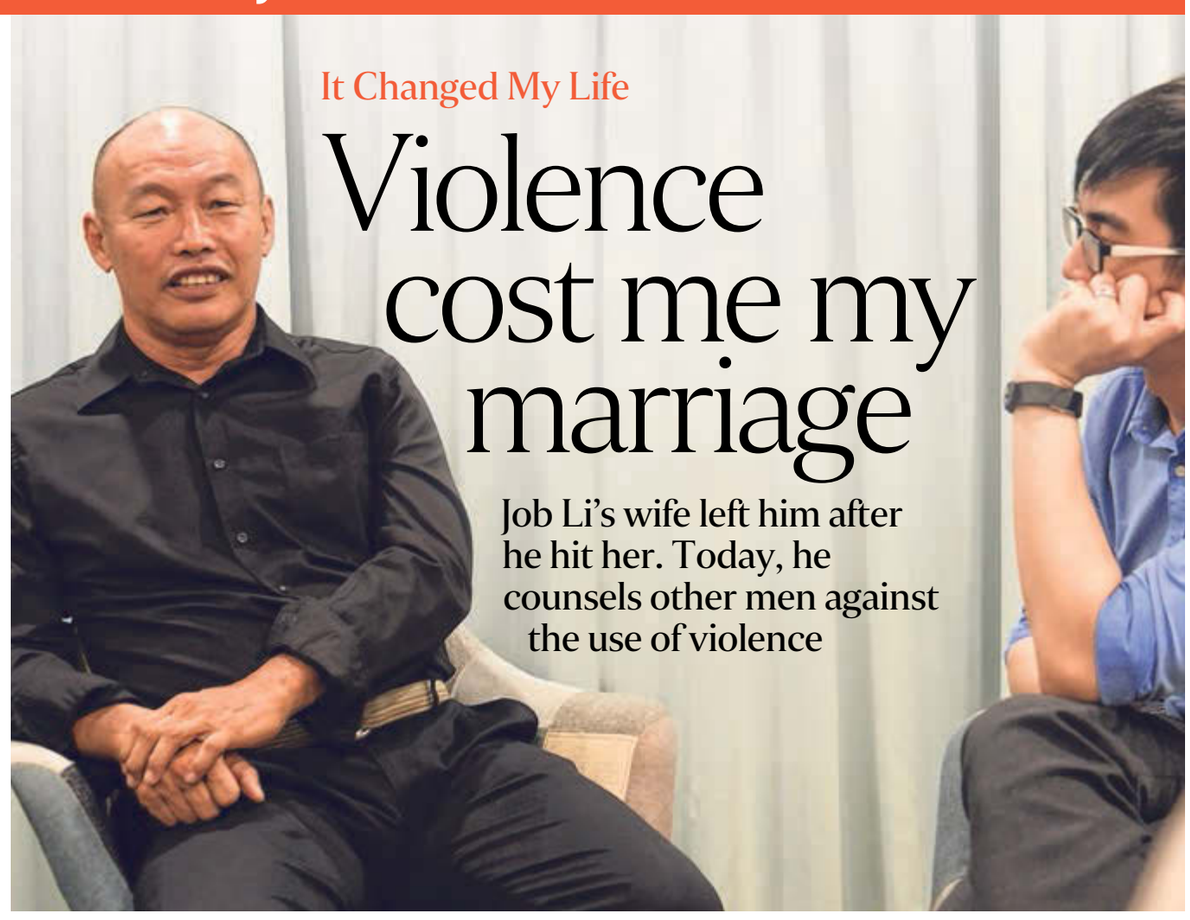
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Food&Drink
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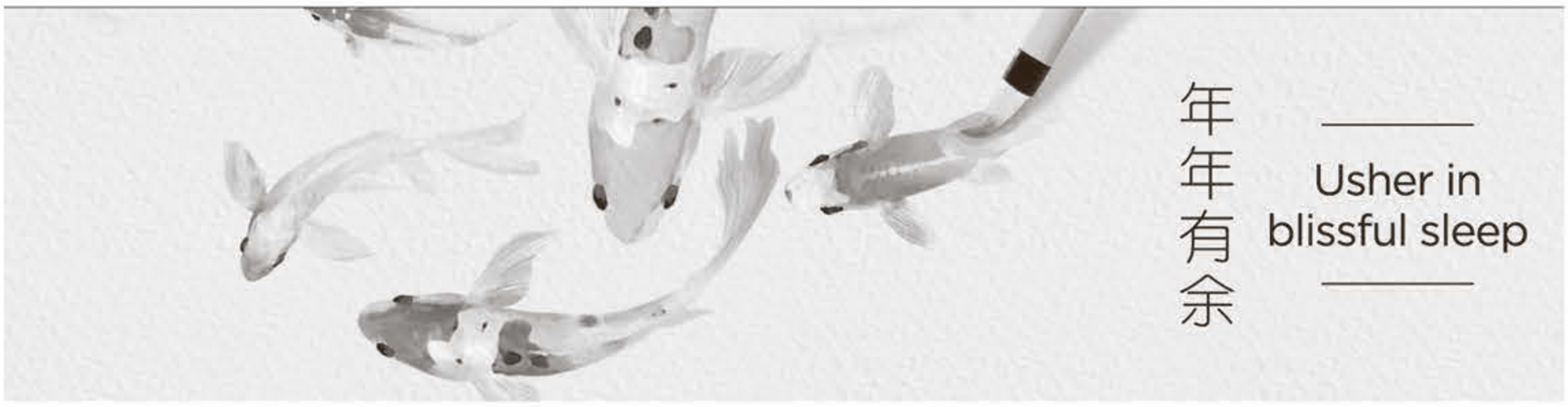
Travel
Lee Siew Hua goes glamping in Yunnan



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Bill Gates – passionate about a long-term view of healthcare

Sumiko Tan
Executive Editor
In Davos



Billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates at an informal discussion in Davos on Wednesday joined by Dr Susan Desmond-Hellmann, CEO of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. ST PHOTO: SUMIKO TAN

The canapes looked delicious but, from the corner of my eye, I saw that the front-row seats were quickly filling up.

No thanks, I told the waitress, hurried over and snagged the last available seat.

Half an hour later, Mr Bill Gates strolled onto the small stage in front, cleared his throat and settled onto a high chair.

For the next one hour, the Microsoft founder-turned-philanthropist shared updates on how he was trying to make the world a better place.

He spoke passionately, with his arms mostly folded across his chest, but sometimes spread out to make a point.

For a man with such incredible wealth – US$95.7 billion (S$130 billion), according to Forbes – he doesn't carry himself with the swagger you see a lot of in Davos at this time of the year, when the World Economic Forum (WEF) takes place and world leaders and business bigwigs roll into town.

A young man from Bahrain sitting two seats away from me said he had seen Mr Gates walking around the area earlier, very low-key.

The man next to me said that at one year's WEF meeting, he saw Mr Gates sitting by himself at a table. He decided to say hello and spent the next hour in conversation with the billionaire.

The event on Wednesday evening was held at the Microsoft Cafe, one of many pop-up structures that big corporations set up in Davos during the WEF.

It was billed as an informal discussion with Mr Gates, and the e-mail invitation came with a handwritten sign-off from "Bill".

In 2000, Mr Gates and his wife set up the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which is the world's largest private charitable foundation.

Improving global healthcare is one of its key objectives, in particular combating infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, Aids and polio in the world's poorest countries.

Over the last two decades, the foundation has donated more than US$10 billion to this effort.

The money has gone mainly to three groups it works with – the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (Gavi), the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

In a piece he wrote in The Wall Street Journal on Tuesday under the headline "The best investment I've ever made", Mr Gates said a calculation has shown that the US$10 billion invested in the global health funds has turned into US$200 billion worth of social and economic benefits.

"They've created a lot of wealth because when people aren't sick in bed, they can go to work or school," he wrote.

Mr Gates, 63, also made the point that while global health groups that buy and distribute medicine save lives, their funding from governments is in danger, and philanthropies can't fill the gap.

It was a theme he returned to at the event on Wednesday, where he was joined by Dr Susan Desmond-Hellmann, an oncologist who is chief executive officer of the Gates foundation.

He showed some slides to back the points he wanted to make.

First, statistics show that the world has become much healthier during the first two decades of the 21st century. Most tellingly, there has been a dramatic decrease in deaths of under-five-year-olds in developing nations.

Also, for every dollar invested in global health, there has been dramatic and outsized returns in the health and productivity of young people in lower- and middle-income nations.

When it comes to global health, he said, a long-term view is needed. People tend to ignore this because they are focused on the here and now.

He acknowledged that the foundation has learnt lessons along the way. "I remember the very first clinics we did in Botswana, we probably over-designed them, a little gold-plated, too many doctors involved in all the decisions," he said, to laughter from the audience.

Over time, processes have been streamlined and there have been more integration and discussions with countries where projects are rolled out, as well as with the private sector. Training, which was a weak point, has also been shored up.

He gave another example of bed nets, used to fight malaria, that tore quickly. The lesson learnt was it is better to pay a bit more and get more durable nets.

Dr Hellmann made the point that philanthropy and the private sector can only do so much and will not be able to take over from what governments do.

To this, Mr Gates added that Gavi and Global Fund regard the basic healthcare system of a country as the key health delivery vehicle of their efforts.

Towards the end of the session, a man from Kenya rose to ask a question and prefaced it by saying he wanted to bring the gratitude of millions of families who have benefited from Mr Gate's money but don't know it.

"Thank you, thank you very much," he said, as the crowd applauded warmly. "You probably don't get that often enough. The gratitude is visible in their faces, but they don't know you and I am here on their behalf."

From where I sit, I see Mr Gates nod at this – no smile – and give the barest hint of a shrug. He is not looking for gratitude, I think, he just wants to get the job done.

sumiko@sph.com.sg
Twitter @STsumikotan

World losing race against climate change: UN chief

He calls for bolder action by governments, lamenting that 'political will is still very slow'

DAVOS • The world is "losing the race" against climate change, United Nations chief Antonio Guterres warned, demanding bolder action from governments to arrest runaway warming.

Mr Guterres delivered the no-holds-barred appraisal yesterday to business and political leaders gathered at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, which has featured much hand-wringing on the planetary crisis this week.

"In my opinion, it is the most important global systemic threat in relation to the global economy," the UN Secretary-General told his high-calibre audience.

"Climate change is running faster than we are," he said. "I believe we are losing the race."

The business community and civil society are increasingly engaged, "but the political will is still very slow", he said, lamenting the position of climate doubters.

"We are moving dramatically into a runaway climate change if we are not able to stop it."

A UN summit last month in Poland, which was designed to advance the Paris climate accord, laid bare continuing fissures over the share of responsibility among countries to cap temperature rises.

The Paris accord has been shaken by the withdrawal of the United States under President Donald Trump, and by threats to do the same by Brazil's new hard-right leader, Mr Jair Bolsonaro.

Mr Guterres, on an earlier Facebook Live broadcast, said the commitments made in Paris were already not enough, and he was not hopeful that nations would find the necessary resolve. "If what we agreed in Paris would be materialised, the temperature would rise more than 3 deg C," he said.

"We need countries to make stronger commitments," Mr Guterres said, calling for more measures to mitigate climate change and adapt to it, along with financial aid for poorer countries.

A WEF survey ahead of the Davos meeting found climate change was the leading concern of forum participants around the world, noting in particular the growing frequency of extreme weather events.

Corporate executives in Davos such as Mr Patrick Pouyanne, chief executive of French energy giant Total, have been touting their own measures to transition to a greener economy.

The UN chief yesterday also warned of another problem faced by the international community. The world is facing worrying fragmentation, Mr Guterres told the audience in Davos, warning that the relationship between the US, Russia and China was worryingly out of kilter. "The relationship between the three most important powers – Russia, the United States and China – has never been as dysfunctional as it is today."

Mr Guterres said the ongoing shift away from a world dominated previously by two Cold War superpowers was creating "a bit of a chaotic situation".

"We no longer live in a bipolar or unipolar world, but we are not yet in a multipolar world," he said.

"Power relations (are) becoming unclear," he added, urging countries to work together and support multilateralism.

The US has been locked in a trade war with China and others that has rocked the financial markets and sparked fears of a slowdown in the global economy.

And Washington's relations with Moscow have been hit by allegations of Russian meddling in US politics and a stand-off over the fate of a Cold War-era nuclear weapons treaty.

The dysfunction is evident "in the economy, but it is also true in the Security Council", Mr Guterres said, lamenting the recurring paralysis of the UN's top body.

"We are in a world in which global challenges are more and more fragmented, and the responses are more and more fragmented," he said. "If this is not reversed, it is a recipe for disaster."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Tharman, Armenian PM discuss boosting trade, investment



Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam met Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Davos yesterday. Mr Tharman said they had a productive conversation, adding in a Twitter post: "A new beginning for Armenia – in politics, governance, opening markets and developing their huge tourism potential." Mr Pashinyan, a former journalist, led a velvet revolution and took office in May last year. His office said they discussed the possibilities for Singapore businessmen to invest in Armenia, and of exporting Armenian products such as brandy, wine, beer and fruit juices to Singapore. Mr Tharman noted that Armenia's links with Singapore go back 200 years, and both countries are working on a free trade agreement between the Eurasian Economic Union and Singapore. He also conveyed an invitation from Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong for Mr Pashinyan to visit Singapore, and Mr Pashinyan stressed the importance of Singapore companies taking part at the World IT Congress in Armenia in October. Mr Tharman also met International Labour Organisation director-general Guy Ryder, who posted a photo of their meeting on Twitter and said: "Singapore's record on jobs, skills, pay and tripartite cooperation is remarkable. Looking forward to visit in April." Mr Tharman said they had a good discussion, adding that Mr Ryder "has been strongly supportive of Singapore's tripartite approach to securing good labour outcomes – especially broad-based income growth and low unemployment". PHOTO: THARMAN_S@TWITTER

Firms can't leave their cyber defence to tech dept: Iswaran

Irene Tham
Senior Tech Correspondent

As companies embrace the new frontiers of digital trade, they too have to shore up their cyber defences by not leaving the job to the technology department, said Minister for Communications and Information S. Iswaran.

"It is a responsibility that has to be undertaken at the highest level – for a company, it would be the CEO or at the board level," he said, speaking to reporters yesterday on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The more businesses embrace digital connectivity, the greater the risk of cyber attacks, he said, responding to questions on what was discussed during a private panel session, Future Frontiers of Cybersecurity, the day before.

Another key point shared was the need to have greater awareness of cyber hygiene habits among the population and in the working environment. "In Singapore, we have emphasised the need for strong passwords, for discipline when you receive unsolicited e-mails and also two-factor authentication," he said.

These were some of the recommendations of a high-level Committee of Inquiry that investigated last June's cyber attack on SingHealth, which had compromised the personal information of 1.5 million patients, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

The recommendations were accepted by the Government after recognising that there were severe lapses by SingHealth's IT vendor Integrated Health Information Systems (IHiS) in securing patient data.

Earlier this month, SingHealth and IHiS were given the largest combined fine of $1 million for failing to protect patient data.

The third key point – which Mr Iswaran said was the most important in the context of Davos – was the need for international norms and rules governing cyberspace.

"Unless there is an agreement among countries on a code of conduct in cyberspace, you cannot have a stable, reliable cyberspace which will foster trust and confidence and allow the growth of the digital economy."

itham@sph.com.sg

ON GLOBAL RULES FOR TECHNOLOGY

When it comes to technology, I would support an overarching body that will set standards on a whole range of things.

SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA, on greater oversight of the technology sector.

ON KHASHOGGI INCIDENT

There is a recognition that this was a truly, truly unfortunate event... Emerging markets around the world are risky, and I think risks are inherent in all investments in emerging markets.

MR MOHAMMED AL KUWAIZ, chairman of the Saudi Capital Market Authority, on the political and public uproar that followed the murder of prominent Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

ON PRIVACY OF FACEBOOK USERS

We did not anticipate all of the risks from connecting so many people... We need to earn back trust.

FACEBOOK'S CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER SHERYL SANDBERG

ON CLIMATE CHANGE

I think it is insane that people are gathered here to talk about the climate and they arrive here in a private jet.

TEEN CLIMATE ACTIVIST GRETA THUNBERG

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Founded in 2010, EU Holidays has grown to become the leading homegrown specialist in European and American tours, with the passion to provide a whole new travel experience. Within the last eight years, we have expanded our operations to include other subsidiary offices – EU Asia Holidays is catered for tours within the Asia region, while EU MICE focuses on corporate travel needs for business meetings, conventions and incentive tours.

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- 奥特斯旅行社
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WORLD



JUAN GUAIDO
VENEZUELAN OPPOSITION LEADER BACKED BY U.S. AS INTERIM PRESIDENT **A22**

Strict succession order followed to pick new king

Pahang ruler elected as Malaysia's new king after special meeting

Trinna Leong
Malaysia Correspondent
In Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's new king was yesterday elected by following strictly the order of succession that had been laid out since independence 60 years ago.

This was despite some speculation that there could be a surprise in the ascension of the new constitutional monarch.

The Malay royal houses elected Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin, the 59-year-old ruler of Pahang, after a special meeting of the Conference of Rulers.

Eight of the nine rulers were present, including Sultan Abdullah himself.

Only the Kelantan ruler, Sultan Muhammad V, was absent,

It was the abdication of Sultan Muhammad V on Jan 6, after just two years as king, that brought about the ascension of Sultan Abdullah yesterday.

The abdication followed news that he had married a Russian beauty queen outside Malaysia.

Till today, neither the Kelantan ruler nor the Malaysian government has confirmed this despite widespread photos of the supposed wedding on social media.

Under the succession order laid out after independence from Britain in 1957, the Pahang house would be next in line to become the Malaysian king, followed by Johor and Perak.

The ascension of the Pahang ruler followed strictly the order of succession as laid out since Malaysia's independence from Britain in 1957. The Pahang house was next in line to become the Malaysian King, followed by Johor and Perak.

Sultan Abdullah will now reign for five years as the king under a unique rotation system involving the nine Malay royal families.

Top state officials and Malaysians poured their congratulations through mainstream media and on social media.

Muhammad Izwan Shah posted on his Facebook account: "Congratulations *Tuanku* (Your Majesty). May Allah bless the country under your reign and may the country prosper and become more developed."

Although the Malay rulers have rather limited roles as constitutional monarchs at state and federal levels, they are seen as important symbols of Malay political power and protectors of Islam in the Malay-majority country of about 32 million people.

Sultan Abdullah will be officially installed as Malaysia's king on Thursday next week.

He became Malaysia's Yang di-Pertuan Agong, or Supreme Ruler, just over a week after he was installed as the new ruler of Pahang, after his father, Sultan Ahmad Shah, 88, stepped down due to declining health.

In a grand installation ceremony at the royal palace in Pekan, Sultan Abdullah was bestowed the full royal title of Al-Sultan Abdullah Ria'yatuddin Al Mustafa Billah Shah ibni Sultan Ahmad Shah al-Musta'in Billah.

The new King is known to be a keen sportsman, while his wife, Tunku Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah Sultan Iskandar, is an avid cook.

Tunku Azizah, 58, is the younger sister of the ruler of Johor, Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar.

Sultan Abdullah has nine children.

ltrinna@sph.cm.sg



Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin has been elected to reign as Malaysia's king for five years, under a unique rotation system involving the nine Malay royal families. He will be officially installed as king on Thursday next week.
PHOTO: EPA-EFE

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Wedding bells to ring soon for Basuki and girlfriend?

A woman seen beside former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama soon after his release from jail has attracted the public's attention.

Ms Puput Nastiti Devi, 21, is a former policewoman.

Media reports say marriage forms have been submitted for their wedding. In fact, rumours about their relationship emerged ahead of Mr Basuki's release.

Ms Puput, who was a junior police officer with the rank of second brigadier, used to be an aide of Madam Veronica Tan, Mr Basuki's former wife of more than 20 years.

Madam Veronica was believed to have often asked Ms Puput to deliver food to Mr Basuki in jail.

Mr Prasetyo Edi Marsudi, head of Jakarta's city council and Mr Basuki's good friend, recently said that the Chinese Christian politician will marry his "girlfriend" in mid-February. "You will witness my marriage, Pras. You will," Mr Prasetyo was quoted as saying by Tribunnews.com, repeating what he said Mr Basuki had told him.

Another close ally of Mr Basuki, former Jakarta deputy governor Djarot Saiful Hidayat, said he had advised Mr Basuki, 52, on the criteria of a new wife. "Yes, (the age gap is big), but it's not a problem. Pak Ahok is now getting younger," he quipped in a recent interview with a television station.

In response to the rumours around the impending marriage, Mr Basuki's sister and his lawyer, Ms Fifi Lety Indra, said their family was not aware of the plan.

Ms Puput, a resident of Depok in South Jakarta, joined the police education system in 2015. A national police spokesman said yesterday that Ms Puput had resigned on Jan 9, Detik news reported.

Linda Yulisman



Former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama is seen here in a photo by Antara Foto with his relatives after his release from prison yesterday. Media reports say marriage forms for his wedding have been submitted. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ex-Jakarta governor out of jail after nearly two years

Supporters turn up to watch Ahok leave as others speculate on his next moves

Linda Yulisman
Indonesia Correspondent
In Depok

Several dozen supporters of former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama sang a song and shouted out his name yesterday as they cheered his release from jail after serving nearly two years for a blasphemy conviction.

Mr Basuki, 52, better known by his Hakka Chinese name Ahok, was jailed in May 2017 after a Jakarta court found him guilty of blasphemy against Islam.

He was sentenced to two years' jail but was released early after remission totalling 3½ months for good behaviour.

Trying to move on, he has requested to be called "BTP", the initials of his full name, henceforth.

Mr Basuki's supporters, clad in red, blue and white shirts, had gathered outside the Mobile Brigade Command's Detention Centre in Depok, South Jakarta, to await his release. They chanted a national song adapted to cheer his freedom, singing "BTP is free, independent!"

"Basuki Tjahaja Purnama got out of the (detention centre) around 7.30am," his secretary, Ms Ima Mahdiah, told journalists, adding that he was picked up by his son Nicholas Sean and a group of close supporters.

Outside the detention centre, his supporters rejoiced at the release of the popular, blunt-speaking former governor, known for being incorruptible.

Mr Ramjan Mohammad, sitting in a wheelchair, waited in front of the detention centre since 1am. He said he spent a few hours travelling from his relative's house in Jatinegara in East Jakarta by train and public buses to see his idol.

The 49-year-old said he had met Mr Basuki a few times and remembers how the former governor voiced his concerns for the rights of disabled people.

"I saw improvement of infrastructure and facilities for disabled people, especially in the transportation sector, during his leadership," he told The Straits Times.

He said he was grateful for the changes introduced by Mr Basuki to the chaotic capital, such as cleaning up Jakarta's dirty rivers. "People still need his thoughts," he said.

"Maybe he can become a minister, especially communication minister because he likes talking," he said with a laugh.

Ms Hesti Iriani travelled hundreds of kilometres by train on Wednesday from her hometown Yogyakarta to witness Mr Basuki's release. "I really want to meet him. I want to support him, let him know he's not alone," she said.

The 50-year-old housewife, who wears a veil, said that Mr Basuki set an example of honesty and discipline which inspired not only other leaders, but also ordinary people.

The hot chatter now is on what Mr Basuki will do next, including speculation that the divorcee with three children will soon marry a 21-year-old former policewoman.

Mr Basuki's lawyer, Mr Teguh Samudera, said the politician plans to get into the oil business in addition to hosting a TV show. Mr Basuki is expected to visit his hometown in East Belitung regency in Bangka Belitung Islands province soon, according to media reports.

He is also expected to take a holiday on the resort island of Bali and then travel to Japan, before speaking about his experience in governing the capital and eradicating corruption at the invitation of several countries, including Australia and New Zealand.

Mr Nicholas Sean posted a photo of him and his father together on Instagram yesterday, saying: "He's back. My dad's a free man! Thank you everyone for the support."

ylinda@sph.com.sg



The 4,040kg rice cake's role in Cambodian politics

Record-setting feats seen by govt as way to engage country's youth, say observers

PHNOM PENH • First came the 4,040kg sticky-rice cake, stuffed with mung beans and pork belly, displayed at Angkor Wat and heralded as "officially amazing" by Guinness World Records.

Then, in rapid succession, came a series of record-setting feats: the largest performance of Madison dancing, with 2,015 participants; and the world's longest scarf (1,149.8m), woven over the course of six months and paraded through the streets of Phnom Penh.

While this streak of oddball achievements might seem unconnected, they are all part of Prime Minister Hun Sen's push to get young people excited about his ageing regime.

"The government's intentions here are rather transparent: They want to create images of visible enthusiasm for the nation and its leadership," said Dr Katrin Travouillon, a scholar of Cambodian politics at Australian National University.

Crowds cheered as a representative from Guinness World Records certified that the rice cake would take its place in the record book alongside Angkor Wat, the world's largest religious structure and a source of enduring national pride.

In a triumphant speech at the event, Mr Hun Many, Mr Hun Sen's youngest and most affable son, said: "I am proud to be a child of Cambodia, and today we have achieved a giant sticky-rice cake, and the world will acknowledge that from now on."

Two-thirds of Cambodia's population is under 30, with no memory of the Khmer Rouge's bloody rule in the 1970s, or the long years of civil war that followed. Many are weary of their country's international reputation for genocide and political dysfunction.

So the country's young are less susceptible to Mr Hun Sen's traditional message that his party's leaders are national heroes, deserving perpetual legitimacy because of the role they played helping to oust the Khmer Rouge from power in 1979.

The new narrative emphasises self-sufficiency and national pride.

A critical plank of this project has been a revival of the country's youth corps, headed by Mr Hun Many. Officially, it is non-partisan; in practice, its activities support the ruling party.

At a November gathering, Mr Hun Many urged corps members to continue garnering world records.

Mr Kim Sok, a political commentator who fled the country last year after serving a jail term for criticising the Prime Minister, has spoken out against the record attempts.

"They have people, power and money, and just order the people to spend the money to get a certificate from Guinness World Records and then use this as propaganda," he said. "I think this certificate mocks the whole nation."

Although older Cambodians seemed sceptical, several young people said the world records resonated with them.

"I think it's amazing," said Ms Man Nisa, a soft-spoken 19-year-old. "I have never seen such achievements." NYTIMES

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High hopes for Gandhi scion

NEW DELHI • Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra may have just made her political debut but she is no stranger to politics in India.

Mrs Vadra, 47, is the younger sister of Congress president Rahul Gandhi, 48, and part of the Gandhi Nehru family, a powerful political dynasty which has given India three prime ministers – her great grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru, grandmother Indira Gandhi and father Rajiv.

Nehru was the first prime minister of India. Her grandmother was India's longest-serving prime minister and her father, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, was India's youngest prime minister at age 40 in 1984.

Over the past two decades, she has helped advise her brother Rahul and has campaigned in the family constituencies of Rae Bareli and Amethi for her mother, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, and brother respectively.

While she remains politically untested, Mrs Vadra's supporters say her uncanny resemblance to her grandmother, her ability to connect with the masses, and her charisma, make her a natural politician.

While her entry into politics has been highly anticipated for years, she has over that time expressed uncertainty about the prospect.

Mrs Vadra and her brother were exposed to tragedy at a very young age and subsequently lived a cloistered life surrounded by heavy security due to threats made against their family.

Grandmother Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguard in 1984 while she was a sitting prime minister. Mrs Vadra was only 12 at the time.

Seven years later, a suicide bomber took the life of her father, who was on the campaign trail in Tamil Nadu for the 1991 elections.

In 2008, she met Nalini Sriharan, who is serving a life sentence for conspiring in her father's assassination.

"Meeting with Ms Nalini was my way of coming to peace with the violence and loss that I have experienced," Mrs Vadra later said in a statement.

Six years after her father's assassination, her Italian mother entered politics to safeguard the Gandhi-Nehru legacy and subsequently led the party to two decisive victories.

Mr Rahul Gandhi, who is seeking to revive the fortunes of the Congress party as its president and lead it to victory in the upcoming general election, has welcomed his sister's entry into politics.

"I am very happy that my sister Priyanka will assist me in UP (Uttar Pradesh) in the Lok Sabha (Lower House) polls. She is very capable," he told reporters.

The siblings have often been compared, with observers saying Mrs Vadra is more outgoing and engaging.

She is also seen to be at greater ease addressing rallies in the Hindi language.

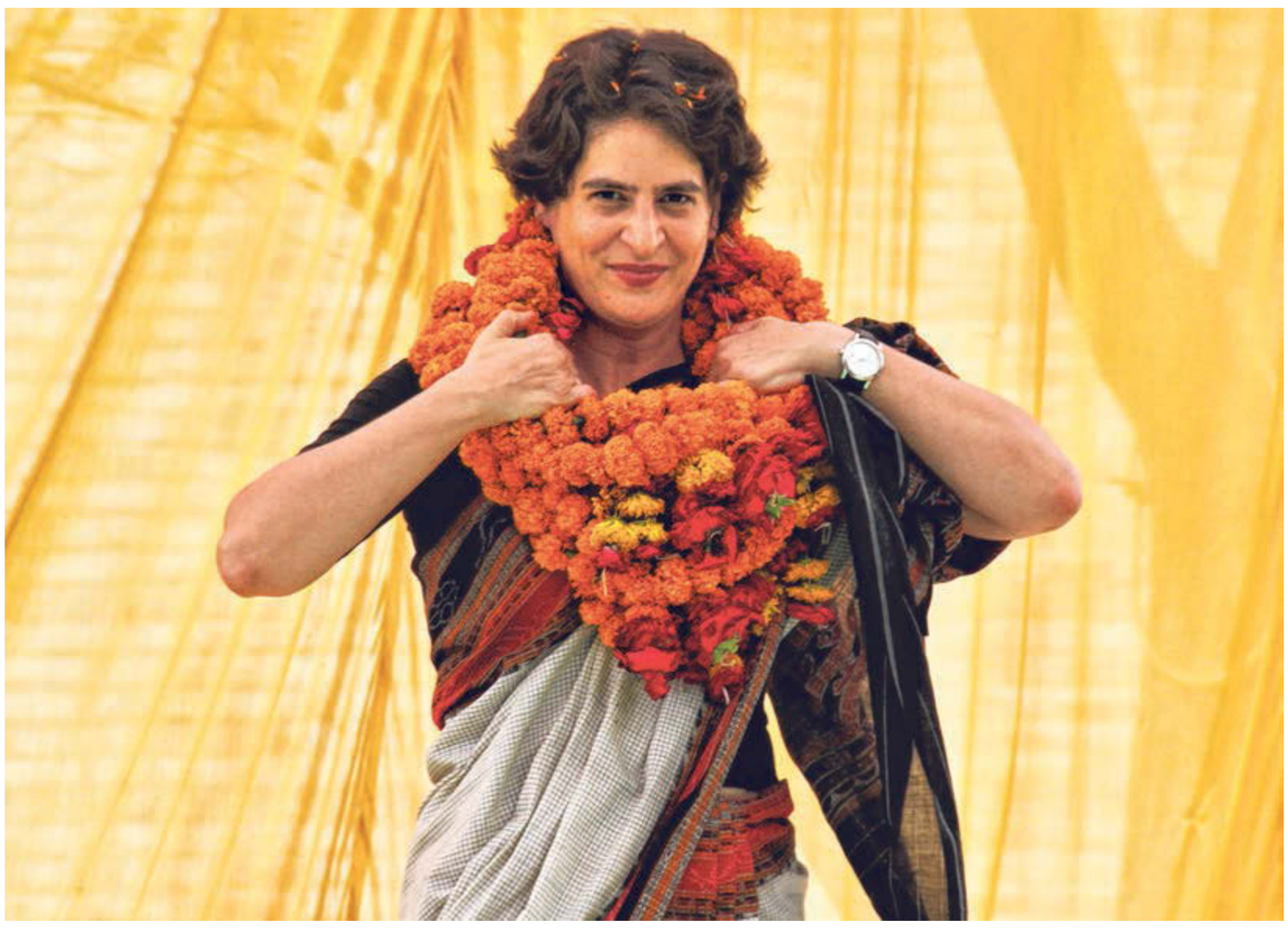
Mrs Vadra is now expected to take charge in February. Political analysts are predicting she would be in demand as a campaigner not just in Uttar Pradesh but across the country.

"For long within the Congress, there has been a clamour for her to get into active politics to supplement her brother.

"She often evokes memories of her grandmother and that's why I am sure as the campaign picks up, demand for her presence in Congress campaigns across the country is going to be there," said Dr Sandeep Shastri, a political analyst and pro-vice-chancellor of Jain University.

"But they have to make sure that she doesn't overshadow the brother."

Nirmala Ganapathy



Mrs Priyanka Gandhi Vadra faces major challenges such as her being part of the Nehru-Gandhi lineage, attracting more BJP accusations of nepotism and dynastic politics in the Congress party, while her husband Robert Vadra's real-estate dealings have also been under government scrutiny. PHOTO: REUTERS

News analysis

Many view Priyanka's entry as boost for Congress party

She is seen as capable of taking on Modi but may not have enough time to prepare for election battle



Nirmala Ganapathy

India bureau chief
In New Delhi

A member of the powerful Nehru-Gandhi political dynasty, Mrs Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, has formally entered politics, a surprise move that analysts say will give a big boost to the opposition Congress party.

The 47-year-old mother of two had, for the most part, stayed out of public view and surfaced mostly during election time to help campaign in the family boroughs in the central state of Uttar Pradesh.

But, on Wednesday, the Congress announced her appointment as the general secretary in charge of east Uttar Pradesh, a key part of the politically important state that, in total, has 80 seats in the Lower House of Parliament.

The announcement comes around three months shy of the country's general elections.

Many political observers, however, were caught by surprise as Mrs Vadra makes her political debut in eastern Uttar Pradesh, where a high-stakes battle is almost certain among the Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and regional parties.

While analysts say her entry will enthuse Congress party workers, they also noted that she has a very short time to organise the Congress campaign and help revive the party's fortunes in Uttar Pradesh.

Eastern Uttar Pradesh includes the Gandhi-Nehru family constituencies of Amethi and Rae Bareli, as well as Mr Modi's constituency Varanasi and Gorakhpur, from where Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath fights.

"She is seen as somebody who appeals to Brahmins of Uttar Pradesh, youth and women because she is very spontaneous. She is seen as someone who can take on (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi," said journalist and author Rasheed Kidwai

"This is a very clever ploy to pin down two key campaigners: Modi and Yogi Adityanath."

Mr Modi powered to victory in 2014 on a wave that decimated the Congress party. Five years on, he still remains the most popular political leader in India, but his re-election bid is burdened by two growing problems: joblessness and farm distress.

Electoral defeats in the BJP's stronghold states of Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh by the Congress last month have also hit Mr Modi's party and energised the opposition.

Efforts are under way to build an opposition alliance.

In Uttar Pradesh, regional parties Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Samajwadi Party (SP) formed a much-talked-about alliance that, however, did not include the Congress party.

While analysts say her entry will enthuse Congress party workers, they also noted that she has a very short time to organise the Congress campaign and help revive the party's fortunes in Uttar Pradesh.

With Mrs Vadra's entry, analysts said, the Congress stole attention away from the alliance and shifted it to the Congress.

"Congress has made a smart move. By bringing in Priyanka, it has enthused the rank and file of Congress," said Dr Anil Kumar Verma, chair of the Centre for the Study of Society and Politics, a research centre in Uttar Pradesh.

"They have also stolen the narrative of the SP-BSP alliance, which everybody was talking about here. Now, it has shifted back to the Congress."

Mrs Vadra, however, faces some major challenges.

Her entry has strengthened the BJP charge of nepotism and dynastic politics in the Congress .

On Wednesday, Mr Modi alluded to it, saying that for some, "family is the party but, for the BJP, party is family".

She is also expected to get heat because of her husband Robert Vadra's real-estate dealings, which have been under government scrutiny, analysts noted.

Also, she has very little time to build up the party's organisational structure in Uttar Pradesh, where the Congress has largely performed poorly in recent years.

Mrs Vadra is well aware of the challenge, said a Congress functionary who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"In a way, it is a challenge for her. It is not easy but she has accepted that challenge," added the functionary.

gnirmala@sph.com.sg



Renault names new chairman, CEO

PARIS • French carmaker Renault yesterday confirmed the appointment of Michelin's Mr Jean-Dominique Senard as its new chairman and Mr Thierry Bollore as new chief executive after Carlos Ghosn resigned in the wake of a financial scandal that rocked the French carmaker and its alliance with Japan's Nissan.

"In addition, Renault's board of directors wishes to supervise actively the functioning of the alliance and decides to give its chairman full responsibility for managing the alliance on behalf of Renault, in liaison with the chief executive officer," Renault said.

The widely expected appointments may begin to resolve a Renault-Nissan leadership crisis that erupted after Ghosn's Nov 19 arrest in Japan last year and swift dismissal as Nissan chairman. After 14 years as Renault CEO and a decade as chairman, Ghosn formally resigned from both roles on the eve of the board meeting, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said.

Ghosn's arrest and indictment for financial misconduct have strained the Renault-Nissan relationship, threatening the future of the industrial partnership he transformed into a global carmaking giant over two decades.

Ghosn has been charged with failing to disclose more than US$80 million (S$108.85 million) in additional compensation for 2010-18 that he had agreed to be paid later. Nissan director Greg Kelly and the Japanese company itself have also been indicted.

Both men deny the deferred pay was illegal or required disclosure, while not contesting the agreements' existence.

Ghosn has denied a separate breach of trust charge over personal investment losses he temporarily transferred to Nissan in 2008.

Mr Senard, 65, faces the immediate task of soothing relations with Nissan, which is 43.4 per cent-owned by Renault but the larger partner by sales.

Following Ghosn's arrest, Nissan CEO Hiroto Saikawa had sought to weaken Renault's control and resisted its attempts to nominate new directors to the Japanese carmaker's board.

In a possible sign of detente yesterday, Nissan called an April shareholder meeting to appoint a Renault-nominated board member and formally terminate Ghosn and Kelly's directorships. REUTERS

Flash floods, landslides kill 30 in Sulawesi

MAKASSAR (Indonesia) • The death toll from flash floods and landslides in Indonesia has risen to 30, as rescuers raced to find two dozen still missing, the disaster agency said yesterday.

Thousands have been evacuated from their homes as heavy rain and strong winds pounded the southern part of Sulawesi island, swelling rivers that burst their banks and inundating dozens of communities in nine southern districts. Parts of the provincial capital Makassar have also been affected.

Rescuers and residents waded through streets filled with waist-deep water, some carrying their belongings above their heads.

"We urge people to always be aware of the possibility of floods and landslides," said national disaster agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho.

The disaster agency said yesterday that while flooding in South Sulawesi province was receding, "the search and evacuation process is still ongoing".

More than 3,000 people have been evacuated and at least 46 are being treated at local hospitals and health clinics. The floods also damaged houses, government buildings, schools and bridges.

In October, flash floods and landslides killed at least 22 people in several districts across Sumatra island.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Indonesian soldiers evacuating residents in Makassar on Wednesday. More than 3,000 people have been evacuated and at least 46 are being treated at local hospitals and health clinics, as heavy rain and strong winds pounded the southern part of Sulawesi island. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Trump letter gives Kim 'great satisfaction'

N. Korean leader orders preparations for second summit with US President

SEOUL • North Korean leader Kim Jong Un expressed "great satisfaction" after receiving a letter from United States President Donald Trump ahead of a second summit between the two, Pyongyang's state media reported yesterday.

Mr Kim was handed the letter by a North Korean envoy who met Mr Trump at the White House last week and gave him a missive of his own.

Mr Trump's meeting with Mr Kim Yong Chol came with negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington on the North's nuclear arsenal deadlocked.

After their talk, Mr Trump said his next summit with the North Korean leader would probably take place near the end of next month, without giving an exact date or location.

Mr Kim Jong Un "expressed great satisfaction" after receiving Mr Trump's "good personal letter", the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

It carried a picture of a broadly smiling Mr Kim holding what appeared to be the letter from Mr Trump and sitting in a plush brown leather armchair in his office with Mr Kim Yong Chol.

"We will believe in the positive way of thinking of President Trump (and) wait with patience and in good faith," KCNA cited Mr Kim Jong Un as saying. He also ordered preparations to be made for the second summit, KCNA reported, in the North's first official comment on the prospective meeting.

Mr Kim and Mr Trump's first encounter was a high-profile summit in Singapore last June – the first meeting between a sitting US president and a North Korean leader.

There, they signed a vaguely-worded document in which Mr Kim pledged to work towards "the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula". But progress has since stalled, with the two sides disagreeing over what that means.

Pyongyang is seeking sanctions relief and rejects demands for what it calls its "unilateral" disarmament, while Washington insists the measures must stay in place until the North gives up its nuclear arsenal.

Even so, last Saturday, Mr Trump said a location for the summit had been decided, without giving more details.

Analysts say a second summit has to make tangible progress on the issue of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons if it is to avoid being dismissed as "reality TV".

Meanwhile, Vietnam said yesterday that it had not been informed about any time or venue of a possible second summit, but is confident of its ability to host such a meeting.

Hanoi is preparing to receive the North Korean leader for a state visit, two sources told Reuters on Jan 17, while officials and diplomats said Vietnam was keen to host a second summit.

"It is up to the US and North Korea to decide on the location and the timing of the summit," foreign ministry spokesman Le Thi Thu Hang told a regular news conference yesterday.

Ms Hang said Vietnam had no information about a summit or a possible state visit by either Mr Trump or Mr Kim, but that it would be able to accommodate them if asked.

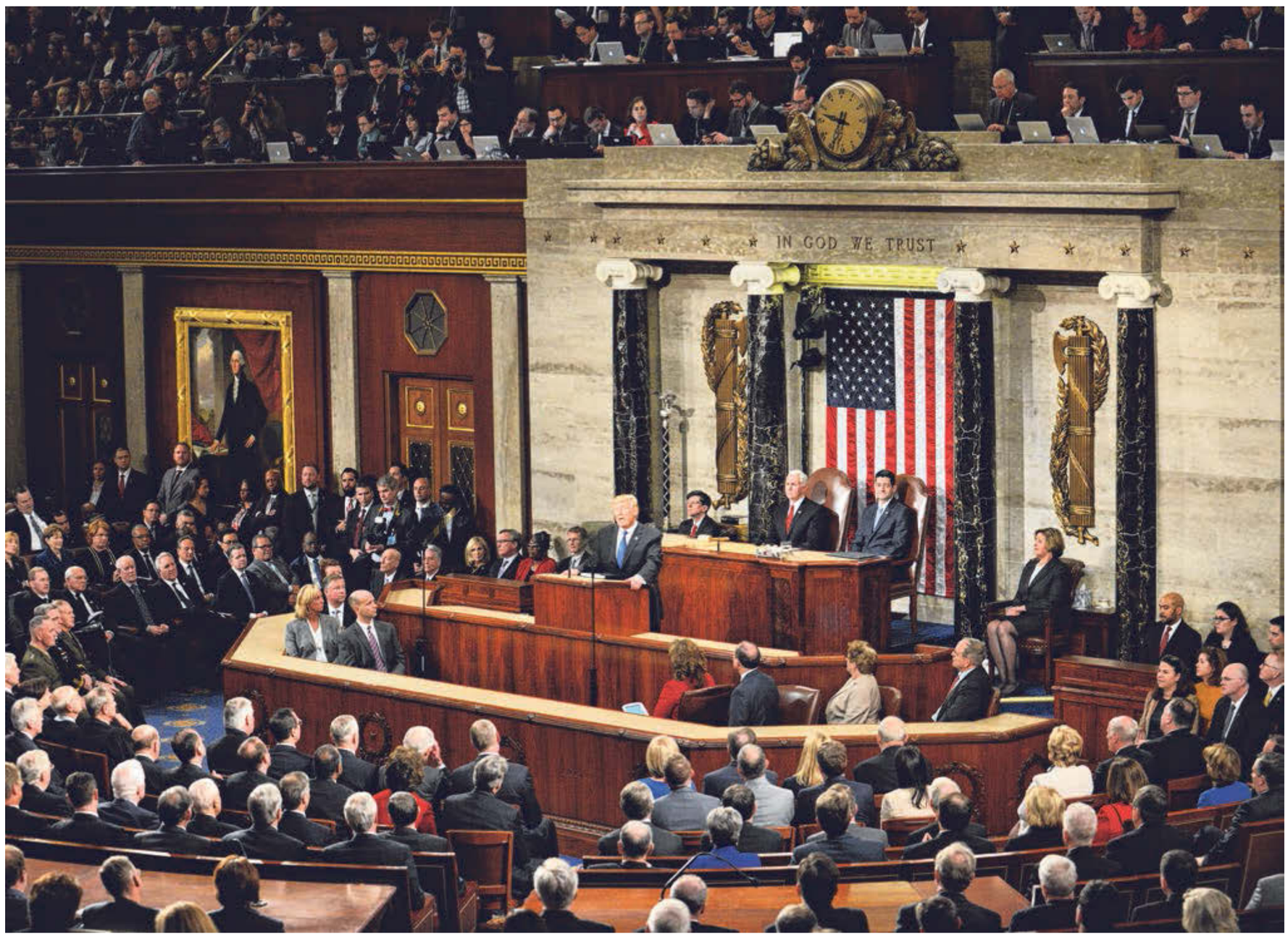
"We are very confident in our ability to host international events in Vietnam, as we successfully held the Apec Summit in 2017 and other international events," said Ms Hang.

Vietnam hosted the 2017 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit in the central city of Danang, and, in September last year, the capital, Hanoi, played host to the World Economic Forum.

Both events were attended by several high-profile world leaders, and both cities have been widely touted as possible locations for the second summit. There has also been speculation about other possible venues, including Bangkok, Hawaii, and a return to Singapore.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS





President Donald Trump delivering his State of the Union address last year. His tit-for-tat with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi over this year's address escalated sharply on Wednesday, with Mr Trump telling Ms Pelosi he would deliver the speech in the Capitol on Tuesday as originally scheduled, and the Speaker firing back that he was not welcome unless the government was fully open. PHOTO: NYTIMES

Trump delays State of Union address after spat with Pelosi

US President says he will deliver speech when shutdown ends; lawmakers set to vote on two competing Bills

WASHINGTON • Mr Donald Trump said on Wednesday that he will deliver his State of the Union address once the federal government reopens, capping a day of brinkmanship with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who told the US President that he was not welcome to deliver the speech in the House chamber while the government was partly closed.

"As the Shutdown was going on, Nancy Pelosi asked me to give the State of the Union Address," Mr Trump wrote on Twitter shortly after 11pm, hours after he had said he would look for another venue for the speech.

"I agreed. She then changed her mind because of the Shutdown, suggesting a later date. This is her prerogative – I will do the Address when the Shutdown is over."

The President's seeming capitulation came even as House Democratic leaders said they were prepared to give him a substantial sum of money for border security – perhaps even the US$5.7 billion (S$7.8 billion) he had requested – but not for a wall and not until he agreed to reopen the government. That figure is roughly double what Democrats had previously approved.

On the other end of the Capitol, in the Republican-controlled Senate, lawmakers prepared for crucial votes yesterday on two competing proposals – one backed by Mr Trump and Senate Republicans, the other by Democrats – that would bring an end to the partial shutdown, although neither might garner the 60 votes necessary for passage.

On Day 33 of the longest government shutdown in history, Washington took on the air of a split-screen television set.

On one side was a spat between Mr Trump and Ms Pelosi over the President's constitutional duty to periodically report to Congress on the state of the union. On the other, the House and Senate trudged along with their daily business, with lawmakers in both parties grasping for a way out of the shutdown stalemate.

It now seems all but certain that 800,000 federal employees who have been either furloughed or working without pay for more than a month will miss another payday today. The best hope, people in both parties say, was that the expected failure of both Bills in the Senate yesterday would prompt bipartisan negotiations that could lead to a compromise.

Those Bills take very different approaches. Mr Trump's Bill would include US$5.7 billion for the wall and extend protections to some immigrants in the country illegally – protections that he himself revoked – while sharply curtailing access to asylum. The Democrats' measure, which has been already passed by the House, would simply fund shuttered government agencies up to Feb 8, with no wall money.

Responding to Mr Trump just before midnight, Ms Pelosi urged the President – who pledged to deliver his address in the "near future" – to accept the Democrats' Bill.

"Mr President, I hope by saying 'near future', you mean you will support the House-passed package to #EndTheShutdown that the Senate will vote on tomorrow," Ms Pelosi wrote on Twitter. "Please accept this proposal so we can reopen government, repay our federal workers and then negotiate our differences."



PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

PELOSI'S ABOUT-FACE

She then changed her mind because of the Shutdown, suggesting a later date. This is her prerogative – I will do the Address when the Shutdown is over.

U.S. PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP, on Ms Nancy Pelosi (above) asking him to deliver his State of the Union Address and then changing her mind.

REOPEN THE GOVERNMENT

Please accept this proposal so we can reopen government, repay our federal workers and then negotiate our differences.

MS NANCY PELOSI, House Speaker, on a possible solution to the impasse.

But with the House set to leave town yesterday, it is highly unlikely that the impasse will end by Tuesday, when Mr Trump was scheduled to deliver his address, an annual Washington ritual that usually plays out with pomp in front of both Chambers of Congress, the Supreme Court, Cabinet secretaries and honoured guests.

For Mr Trump, it would have been a moment to command the stage – with television cameras rolling and Ms Pelosi stuck behind him, trying to figure out whether to grimace or nod.

Now, the President is trying to paint Ms Pelosi as a left-wing radical who cancelled the address for political reasons, despite her assertion that she simply wanted to postpone, not cancel, it because of the burden it would impose on Secret Service agents working without pay.

"It's really a shame what's happening with the Democrats," Mr Trump told reporters at the White House. "They've become radicalised."

In the afternoon, Mr Trump pledged to "do something in the alternative", and it was not clear at the time whether he had given up on holding the speech in the Capitol. Some lawmakers raised the possibility that he could deliver it in the Senate chamber.

But others, as well as some Trump advisers, suggested that it would be better for him to issue the speech at the border or during a rally.

But, ultimately, the President wrote on Twitter, he decided against an alternative site "because there is no venue that can compete with the history, tradition and importance of the House Chamber".

He added, "I look forward to giving a 'great' State of the Union Address in the near future!" NYTIMES

Huawei's results unaffected by West's spying allegations

Lim Yan Liang
China Correspondent
In Beijing

Chinese tech giant Huawei yesterday said its business has not been affected by problems in some Western countries.

The world's biggest producer of telecommunications equipment said its consumer business grew around 50 per cent last year to US$52 billion (S$71 billion), with 206 million smartphones shipped.

The growth, which came on the back of strong demand for its premium smartphones, has led to the company's consumer business unit overtaking carrier business as its largest segment of sales, Huawei's head of the consumer division, Mr Richard Yu, said.

Mr Yu, who launched Huawei's new 5G modem chipset yesterday, was also bullish on the tech giant achieving smartphone supremacy – with its own technology – as early as this year.

Huawei has outpaced Apple for two straight quarters to be the second-largest smartphone vendor in the world, and is nipping at the heels of leader Samsung with a year-on-year growth of 33 per cent in market share, according to research firm IDC.

The handset that Huawei billed as the world's first foldable fifth-generation (5G) smartphone will use Huawei's Kirin 980 chipset and the new Balong 5000 modem, which the Chinese company has touted as "the world's most powerful". It claims that the modem is twice as fast as anything from American rival Qualcomm, based on internal tests.

The device will be unveiled at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona next month, said Mr Yu.

Huawei has faced intense scrutiny over the past year over its relationship with the Chinese government, with the company repeatedly denying US-led allegations that its devices could be used by Beijing for spying.

A Huawei executive was arrested in Poland earlier this month on suspicions of spying. The arrest came just two months after chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou was detained in Canada in connection with violating US trade sanctions on Iran.

Reuters reported yesterday that top US universities such as the University of California at Berkeley were ditching equipment made by Huawei and other Chinese companies to avoid losing federal funding under a new national security law backed by the Trump administration.

Mr Yu said the allegations against the company have had little influence on its business because Huawei's products and reputation speak for themselves, adding that they were competitive because the company invested heavily in innovation.

"Our customers have trust and confidence in us," he said.

Referring to the allegations, he said: "It's only some politicians trying to bring a lot of noise to put pressure on us." Mr Yu said he expects 2019 to be another banner year for Huawei as 5G begins to be rolled out across the world.

The firm has successfully rolled out over 30 5G field trials in 17 Chinese provinces, with speeds that are 97 times faster than current 4G signals, said Huawei vice-president of wireless network Yang Chaobin.

Mr Yu said: "In the Internet-of-things era, we will enjoy greater growth."

Many industry experts agree that Huawei is poised to reap the fruits of its extensive investments in the full spectrum of new-generation mobile technologies.

"Huawei approaches the telecoms industry in a systematic way, meaning it develops all areas within the ICT environment, from silicon chips to devices to network infrastructure to cloud," said Mr Tarun Pathak, associate director at market research firm Counterpoint Technology. "Given how all-encompassing 5G is going to be, this 'total-telecom' approach is powerful, as no other industry player is doing anything similar."

yanliang@sph.com.sg

Bing search engine back online in China: Microsoft

BEIJING • Microsoft's search engine Bing resumed service to Chinese users yesterday after a disruption raised fears among social media users that it was the latest foreign website to be blocked by censors.

Attempts to access Bing had resulted in an error message for users starting late on Wednesday as the most prominent foreign search engine available in China experienced a temporary blackout.

Microsoft's search engine was blocked due to "an accidental technical error", according to Bloomberg, citing two anonymous sources – rather than a deliberate attempt to restrict Bing, which already complies with local censorship rules.

On Weibo, China's Twitter-like social media site, people rejoiced over the return of Microsoft's search engine. "Bing has returned," wrote one user, adding three sobbing emojis. "I am moved!"

The temporary shutdown of Bing had raised concerns that Microsoft's search engine was the latest victim of online censorship in China, which authorities have ramped up in recent years.

China's communist government operates an online censorship apparatus known as the "Great Firewall", which blocks a slew of websites, including Facebook, Twitter and several foreign media outlets.

Weibo users complained about the lack of access starting late on Wednesday, with some speculating that Bing too had been "walled off". AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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Venezuelan leader to rally military amid ouster bid

Maduro holds on to power as US-backed Guaido declares he is 'acting president'

CARACAS • Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro is preparing to rally his military supporters as the US and key allies backed a challenge from his leading rival, who declared himself "acting president".

The announcement by Mr Juan Guaido, 35, head of Venezuela's opposition-led legislature, came amid a fresh wave of deadly street clashes on Wednesday.

He declared himself acting leader of the oil-rich nation, which has lurched into economic chaos and violence under Mr Maduro, 56.

The socialist government responded by warning that the top military leadership would come out yesterday "in support of the constitutional president", Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez said. He added that the military would show "backing for the sovereignty" of Venezuela.

That was a warning shot to Mr Maduro's foreign critics as they rallied behind Mr Guaido.

US President Donald Trump declared Mr Maduro "illegitimate" and called the National Assembly legislature "the only legitimate branch of government".

A furious Mr Maduro responded to the US move by breaking off diplomatic ties with the "imperialist" US government, giving its diplomats 72 hours to leave.

The US State Department said it did not recognise Mr Maduro as president any more, so his order meant nothing.

A senior US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, warned Mr Maduro and his loyalists that Washington was ready to ramp up oil, gold and other sanctions and take unspecified actions "if they choose to harm any of the National Assembly members or any of the other duly legitimate officials of the government of Venezuela".

Asked whether he was considering US military intervention, Mr Trump told reporters: "We're not considering anything, but all options are on the table."

France, Britain and the European Union yesterday added their support for Mr Guaido, although the European Commission, the EU's executive, declined to explicitly recognise Mr Guaido as the country's interim leader and called for a political process leading to new elections.

Mr Maduro's key ally Russia, meanwhile, denounced Mr Guaido's bid as a "usurpation" of power and condemned what it called foreign "interference" in Venezuela.

Mr Maduro's key financial backer China also weighed in. Foreign ministry spokesman Hua Chunying said China opposes "interference" in Venezuelan affairs and called for a "political resolution".

A dozen regional players have also backed Mr Guaido, including Brazil, Argentina, Colombia and Canada. Mexico and Cuba stood firm in support of Mr Maduro.

Mr Guaido's pronouncement capped days of unrest that have seen 13 people killed, the Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict told Agence France-Presse.

They were the first mass street protests in Venezuela since a peak of violence in April and July 2017 when 125 people died in clashes.

Riot police fired tear gas and rubber bullets at opposition protesters in one Caracas suburb, while television pictures also showed armoured vehicles in the capital.

Thousands of Mr Maduro supporters, many wearing red, converged outside the presidential palace Miraflores to oppose what they said was a US-backed opposition coup attempt.

Elsewhere in Caracas, tens of thousands of opposition supporters rallied, dressed in white and waving Venezuelan flags.

"Guaido, friend, the people are with you," they chanted.

Mr Maduro was re-elected in May in snap elections boycotted by the opposition and denounced around the world as illegitimate.

He has held on to power in the face of mass protests, international pressure and opposition efforts to oust him.

Analysts at the Eurasia Group consultancy said his opponents could only prevail if the top military command abandons him. REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Protesters at a rally on Wednesday against Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, who was re-elected in May in elections boycotted by the opposition and denounced around the world as illegitimate. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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Australian heatwave hits record 49.5 deg C

ADELAIDE • Temperatures in southern Australia topped 49 deg C yesterday, shattering previous records, as citizens received free beer and heat-stressed bats fell from trees.

The Bureau of Meteorology reported temperatures of 49.5 deg C north of Adelaide, while inside the city, temperatures reached 47.7 deg C, breaking a record that had stood since 1939.

Adelaide residents are used to sweltering days during the Southern Hemisphere summer, but even they struggled with the oppressive temperatures.

More than 13 towns across South Australia state have smashed their own heat records.

The state's health authorities early yesterday reported that 44 people had received emergency treatment for heat-related illnesses in the past 24 hours.

"Remember to check on elderly friends, relatives and neighbours, and those who are unwell," the state emergency services tweeted.

The health authorities were also forced to issue a public warning to avoid contact with hundreds of heat-stressed bats falling from trees in parkland areas.

The authorities in central Australia said they had to cull more than 50 feral horses after finding 90 dead or dying wild brumbies near a dried-up waterhole.

Shocking images of dozens of dead horses strewn across the dry ground began to circulate on social media this week.

"With climate change well and truly upon us, we expect these emergencies to occur with increasing frequency, and nobody is truly prepared and resourced to respond to them," said Mr David Ross, director of indigenous representative body Central Land Council.

While thousands of people have flocked to the beaches to cool off in the surf, hundreds have taken to shopping centres to stay out of the heat.

At the Red Lion Hotel in South Australia, publicans gave a free beer to each of their patrons while the temperature remained above 45 deg C. Around 100 people lined up for more than an hour.

At Adelaide Zoo, tortoises have been getting cool water wipe-downs, rock wallabies have been given ice to lick and hyenas have taken refreshing dips.

But the temperatures are also testing municipal services, with Sun City buses forced to cut their services, leaving commuters searching for trams or trains to get home.

Emergency services are on the alert as more than 13 districts are under threat of possible bush fires.

Meanwhile, a total fire ban was issued further south in the island state of Tasmania, where the authorities continued to battle blazes. Parts of the south-eastern state of Victoria were also sweltering through temperatures above 40 deg C.

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The Straits Times says

Space for broader US-China cooperation

It probably came as a pleasant surprise to the wider space science community to learn that the United States space agency Nasa is working with the Chinese on their lunar landing research despite ongoing rivalry and tensions over a broad swathe of issues – from trade and technology to intellectual property and auto imports. Collaboration between two of the world's leading space nations can only be good for space exploration and research. But questions remain as to whether the coming together will have a positive impact on other critical areas of the relationship where Washington and Beijing are still at loggerheads. Nasa announced the cooperation last Friday after the Chang'e-4 probe successfully landed on the far side of the moon on Jan 3 – a first for any nation, and a significant technical achievement. The US agency obtained approval from Congress to broach cooperation. And therein lies the rub.

Since 2011, Nasa has been banned from bilateral cooperation with the Chinese by a clause in the agency's funding Bill because of what was seen as China's theft of US technology. Congressman Frank Wolf, who introduced the legislation, said the US did not want to give China the opportunity "to take advantage of our technology, and we have nothing to gain from dealing with them". But with its own moon programme discontinued – and restarting only next year – there are things the US can learn from the lunar landing. A year before China's mission, Nasa discussed collaborating. It asked that Chang'e-4 carry a Nasa beacon to the moon, and that the life of the relay satellite – needed for the far-side exploration – be extended for the US' own mission to the moon's dark side. Nasa also asked China to share information on the landing – which the Chinese did. But the Chang'e-4 did not take a US beacon, although it carried scientific equipment for four other countries. The collaboration, while a good start, is limited to the collection, exchange and analysis of data from the lunar probe.

It is understandable if the Chinese appeared reluctant to cooperate fully with Nasa. The earlier cooperation ban aside, the US also blocked China from the 15-nation International Space Station (ISS) project. It led China to develop its own station. Scheduled to be fully operational in 2022, it will be the only one around if the ISS is retired in 2024, as is expected. That increases the likelihood that other nations will want to be a part of the station. The US also risks being left out of a planned Chinese moon base. With the intensification of their tech rivalry – the US has sought to slow Chinese tech development, including through a tariff war – further collaboration could prove difficult. With China growing in confidence, the US must again weigh the benefits of cooperation against a protracted strain in the relationship. A decision in the affirmative will have useful benefits for all.

SpeakingOfAsia

Jordan's balancing act

Caught in a troubled neighbourhood, Amman has to balance its domestic and regional priorities with close ties to Washington



Ravi Velloor
Associate Editor



Most Mexicans know the saying, "Poor Mexico. So close to the United States, so far from God". These days, you couldn't fault the Jordanians if they have begun to feel the same way.

It is bad enough to be situated in a tough neighbourhood. Since independence in 1946, the small West Asian kingdom surrounded by Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Israel has been subject to waves of refugees, including Iraqis, Palestinians and latterly, a flood of Syrians who now constitute about one in 10 of the resident population.

With few natural resources – certainly none of the oil reserves that made many Gulf nations so wealthy overnight in the last century – the Hashemite Kingdom has had to live by its wits. It has staved off domestic instability by co-opting its elites and adopting a measure of social and economic reform that has helped it avoid the turbulence that the Arab Spring delivered to countries such as Egypt.

Externally, it has maintained close ties with the US and Britain and is only one of two Arab states to have a peace treaty with Israel. At the same time, it has a working relationship with Iran. It is also the custodian of Jerusalem's Muslim and Christian holy sites, even as it takes special care to keep on the right side of the Saudis, who are said to be themselves eyeing control of the sites in order to facilitate the Trump administration's peace plan for the region.

Thus, it claims a centrist position in West Asian politics in more ways than one.

Late last year, Jordan officially inaugurated its embassy in Singapore – only its third in South-east Asia, after Indonesia and Malaysia. Visiting Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, a Western- educated, well-spoken envoy, told The Straits Times that King Abdullah made the decision because he sees Singapore as a model of excellence, not only in economics and education, but also for its diversity and celebration of plurality.

PALESTINE AND SYRIA

Mr Safadi's priority these days, as the region awaits the Middle East peace plan being put together by US presidential son-in-law Jared Kushner, is to ensure that any settlement happens only on the basis of a two-state solution.

Close as Amman is to Washington, it keeps a weather eye on the issue, fearful that Mr Kushner may come up with something that overwhelmingly favours Israel, something that would be unacceptable with even the most moderate Arab regimes.

The path to comprehensive peace in the region is something that would secure Israel's right to exist, alongside a Palestinian state, Mr Safadi says. "Jerusalem is the key to peace. It is holy to Muslims, Christians and Jews, and it could be the city that could bring us all together. East Jerusalem has to be the capital of a Palestinian state."

The other external priority is Syria, where the conflict is now in its ninth year. There, too, only a political solution that guarantees the unity and integrity of the country can provide the lasting route to peace, he says.

There is, of course, the overarching issue of terrorism.

While the military battle against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has largely succeeded when it comes to denying territory to the extremist force and shrinking its physical space, ISIS is by no means totally vanquished. And that calls for closer networking, data sharing and coordination at many levels between countries.

"The most important battle is the ideological one," says Mr Safadi. "We have to expose them as outlaws, people who work against the true values of Islam. If people lose hope, they become fodder for radicals. Daesh (ISIS) is a magnet for radicals. That is why it is all the more important that we settle the Palestinian issue."

ISIS NOT TOTALLY VANQUISHED

The most important battle is the ideological one. We have to expose them as outlaws, people who work against the true values of Islam. If people lose hope, they become fodder for radicals. Daesh (ISIS) is a magnet for radicals. That is why it is all the more important that we settle the Palestinian issue.

JORDANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AYMAN SAFADI, who believes that settling the Palestinian issue and the crisis in Syria will remove key sores that terrorists use as a message for recruitment.

Settling that Palestinian issue and the crisis in Syria will remove key sores that terrorists use as a message for recruitment. Hence, the need to look at the Middle East situation from a holistic perspective, Mr Safadi says. Home-grown radicalism, he adds, is not something countries such as Jordan are equipped to deal with.

THE TRUMP CHALLENGE

It's not easy being a US ally these days, with an American president who goes deaf when told something he doesn't like and does not get his hearing back until he hears the endorsement that he seeks, or will hammer his moves down your throat anyway.

Take the issue of Palestine. King Abdullah, Jordan's king since 1999, has held several meetings with President Donald Trump, with Palestine always topping the agenda. Despite its close ties to Washington, Jordan has not hesitated to speak its mind with Mr Trump, says Mr Safadi. And its demands begin with recognition of East Jerusalem as the future capital of a Palestinian state, along with security guarantees for, and acceptance of, Israel.

This is why Jordan opposed Mr Trump's announcement in December 2017 that the US would move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a move that led to street protests in Amman.

Mr Trump said in March last year that with US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and the decision to move its embassy there: "Jerusalem is now off the table." Mr Safadi says the future of the city must be decided only as part of a final settlement and in the context of a broader peace plan.

"The last thing we want to see is a peace plan that does not work," he says. "What then would be Plan B? We cannot afford to throw in the towel because that would be a vacuum everyone will seek to exploit."

Likewise, there are also serious issues with the US over the UN Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, which Mr Kushner would like to see wind up its work in the region after operating for seven decades.

UNRWA runs some 170 schools in Jordan that have a total of about 121,000 students. Its 25 primary health centres handle more than 1.5 million visits a year, and 10 recognised refugee camps shelter around 370,000 refugees.

Mr Kushner also has apparently been pushing to remove the refugee status of millions of Palestinians. The Trump administration has frozen hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to UNRWA, with the US President linking the decision to the Palestinians' refusal to speak with his administration after he recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital. He has also ordered the closure of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's Washington office – moves all seen as carrying a pro-Israeli bias.

Since Jordan hosts more than two million registered Palestinian refugees, the largest number of Palestinian refugees in all UNRWA field areas , this issue is a matter of critical importance to it.

"UNRWA must continue delivering key services to five million Palestinian refugees. If you do not make available schools for the 260,000 (young people who live) in Gaza, you are sending them to the streets," says Mr Safadi.

Some years ago, there was talk that Jordan would be invited into the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), but not much of that is heard any more. With the Saudi blockade of gas-rich Qatar, the GCC now has an open rupture in the ranks anyway, making the group less effective.

Jordan, whose economy is greatly dependent on Saudi Arabia, will continue to maintain cordial ties with Doha and, even as it has no direct borders with Qatar, the two remain connected by air, says Mr Safadi.

NETTLESOME NEIGHBOURS

Just as with the Palestine issue, Mr Trump's strident positions on Iran also make many West Asian states uneasy. While emphasising that no one wants to see a nuclear power rise in the region, or one that makes a habit of interfering in the internal affairs of neighbouring states, Jordan believes that with Iran, too, negotiations are the best approach, says Mr Safadi.

"The sanctions are going to complicate the situation," he says. "It will have a tremendous impact, not only on the region but the global economy."

Likewise, another nettlesome neighbour that Jordan cannot wish away is Saudi Arabia. The gruesome murder last October of Saudi journalist and activist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, apparently on the orders of a high-ranking royal in Jeddah, has caused even close allies of the kingdom to hold their noses. What does Jordan have to say?

"First, let me say the stability and security of Saudi Arabia are key to regional security," says Mr Safadi. "Saudi Arabia is a key player in the region and will continue to be so. (That said), we condemn this horrendous crime, and our position is clear: We all need to see an investigation that makes sure that justice will be served."

velloor@sph.com.sg

Budget airline? Sure, but good basic service still a must

Better handling of flight delays, with regular updates and swift refunds, can help ease travellers' woes



Karamjit Kaur

Senior Aviation Correspondent



A recent spate of flight delays has made many Scoot customers unhappy, with travellers less concerned about what caused the delays, and more bothered about how they had no updates from the airline on what to expect when services were disrupted, as well as tedious refund procedures. PHOTO: SCOOT

A spate of flight delays in recent weeks has made many Scoot customers unhappy.

The incidents that came to light from last Nov 25 stemmed mainly from different technical problems with the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. They caused delays ranging from a few hours to up to 56 hours for thousands of passengers.

Travellers who wrote to me and The Straits Times Forum Page were less concerned, though, about what caused the delays and more bothered about how they were treated when services were disrupted.

Suffice it to say, many were not impressed with Scoot, the budget arm of Singapore Airlines (SIA). Their pet peeves: They had no idea what was going on and no updates from the airline on what to expect.

Those affected told me they were also confused by Scoot's policy on refunds, as well as accommodation and meals. Some were put up in hotels while others just waited at the airports.

Refund procedures were tedious, they added, with calls to customer service centres usually unanswered and e-mails rarely replied to.

It is easy to brush aside these complaints and say that budget travellers deserve what they get; if you pay peanuts, you get monkeys. I don't think that's very fair, though.

Low-cost carriers may be budget airlines, but certain service standards must still be met.

BUDGET DOES NOT MEAN ZERO SERVICE

To be sure, those who fly budget but expect full-service treatment – and there are such travellers even 15 years after low-cost carriers first started flying to Singapore – are unreasonable. Just because Scoot is owned by SIA does not mean customers should expect SIA services. There is a reason why SIA charges more for its flights than Scoot does.

In its "promise" to customers – the terms of which are clearly stated on its website – Scoot says that for delays beyond three hours, passengers will receive a $50 travel voucher each. "For other direct costs such as hotel and ground transport expenses, we recommend that you always be covered by travel insurance," the airline says.

"In the event we significantly delay a flight, we will, to the best of our ability, provide meals, accommodation, assistance in rebooking and transportation to the accommodation to mitigate inconveniences experienced by our guests resulting from such flight delays," the airline adds. The airline will not be liable in cases where flight delays and misconnections arise due to factors beyond its control.

But whether you fly Scoot or SIA, there is a basic level of service that all travellers should be entitled to. For example, flights should take off and land on time. Where this is not possible, for technical or other reasons, including bad weather, airlines should be duty-bound to inform affected travellers as soon as possible, preferably via SMS – probably the best way to ensure that the message is received by travellers on the road, who may not have easy access to e-mail.

At the airport, there must be an airline representative who can provide regular updates to keep travellers informed of what is happening. While one can appreciate that it is not always possible for the airline to know what the exact problem is and how long it will take to be resolved, any update – no matter how small – is always better than silence, which just adds to the frustration.

When passengers are stuck in an aircraft on the tarmac, pilot announcements are always reassuring. Surprisingly, not all airlines bear this in mind.

When flights are cancelled, extra resources must be deployed to expedite refund processes. Customers should not have to keep calling to ask for updates.

Airlines should also act fast to help those affected with their insurance claims, for example, by issuing relevant supporting documents such as a notice to state the length and possible cause of the delay.

It would be great if airlines did all this, but clearly, not all will.

CAN REGULATION HELP?

Is there a role for regulation here?

Under European laws, all airlines, including budget carriers, must pay passengers compensation of up to €600 (S$925) for prolonged delays – three hours and more – or when flights are cancelled at short notice.

The rules apply to all flights that depart from Europe, and on all European carriers flying into Europe. Airlines are not liable if the delay or cancellation is due to extraordinary circumstances, for example, bad weather conditions.

In the United States, the protection is less comprehensive and covers only passengers who are denied boarding or those affected by tarmac delays. Flight delays and cancellations are not covered.

Canada is also reportedly considering new rules to protect air travellers.

But many other countries do not have such rules, as they require resources to regulate and enforce. Singapore doesn't either. Should it consider similar legislation? Experts have their doubts.

Transport expert Terence Fan from the Singapore Management University said: "It would be a nice thing to have for Singapore's originating passengers to have such protection. However, it is not often that airlines experience extremely long delays out of Singapore. So I'm not sure whether the problem is that prevalent here."

It would also be tedious for the authorities here to regulate not just local but also foreign carriers flying out of Singapore, Assistant Professor Fan noted.

In a free market, consumers should ideally vote with their wallets to alter errant merchant behaviour. The challenge in the air travel business, though, is that not all markets are exposed to the same level of competition.

Customers have many options when flying to popular places such as Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Hong Kong, but for those flying from Singapore to Athens, Greece, for example, only Scoot offers a direct flight.

While encouraging airlines to open new links and routes to boost the Singapore air hub – a good number of which are now served only by budget carriers – aviation authorities here should also do what they can to protect consumers.

To some extent, this is already being done. Last May, I reported that there were plans for penalties to be rolled out for airlines that do not watch the clock.

Not only habitual latecomers, but also early birds who end up disrupting schedules, will face a fine of up to $100,000 and risk losing their landing slots. It's a good scheme that should be implemented as soon as possible and strictly enforced.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) and Changi Airport Group (CAG) should go one step further.

Consumers can make good choices only if they have access to information. To help them, CAAS/CAG should compile and publish relevant data such as scheduled versus actual departure and arrival times for all flights to and from Singapore. While such information is already available, it is limited to three days of arrivals and departures.

It would also help if other details, such as aircraft type and the causes of delays – whether they are related to air traffic, weather or the airline – are provided.

Other performance indicators, such as check-in waiting times, should also be made easily available.

Whether it is SIA or Scoot, no airline can guarantee a smooth flight. But some address disruptions better than others. In the end, good information and savvy customers who expect good service can help raise standards.

karam@sph.com.sg

Don't give up on dockless bike sharing just yet

Better regulation can unlock the potential of such services, in spite of the troubles faced by some companies running the business

Zhou Yimin and Xu Yuting

For The Straits Times



It takes collaboration between the government, the private sector and the public to plan, regulate and adapt to bike sharing, say the writers. ST FILE PHOTO

Dockless bike-sharing services run by private firms made their debut in Singapore in January 2017. Today, two years later, there has been a shake-up, with a few pulling out of Singapore and at least one China-based company facing bankruptcy.

Despite this, dockless bike sharing remains a true innovation that can continue to offer genuine value to commuters, if managed right.

Upon its launch two years ago, the new bike-sharing service model quickly took Singapore by storm. By the middle of last year, these private operators had dominated Singapore's bike-sharing scene, with a total fleet size of more than 100,000 by last September.

Dockless shared-bike systems attracted their fair share of complaints from Day 1, particularly on parking issues. To expand market share, well-funded operators flooded the streets with massive numbers of colourful bikes to attract usage and promote their brands. This, coupled with indiscriminate parking by users, led to bikes cluttering sidewalks and other public spaces in many cities. Bikes were often left haphazardly, sometimes in disrepair, along walkways or in open spaces.

In March last year, Singapore passed a new Bill to manage dockless shared bikes. Operators are required to apply for a permit to operate the business, pay a registration fee for each bike, and actively maintain the bikes and ensure proper parking.

Failure to comply will result in penalties such as a reduction of fleet size, fines and suspension, or cancellation of licences.

Singapore is not alone in finding ways to manage the issues arising from the complaints. Several cities took a similar approach to regulate fleet size and improve overall service standards.

Geofencing technology plays an important role. Many Chinese cities designated "no parking" areas for shared bikes – including bridges, road carriageways, and areas near major government buildings – that show up as red boxes on mobile phone apps. Parking within these areas will be detected and users will receive notifications via SMS or the app about potential penalties. Changsha has seen an 80 per cent reduction in errant parking in just two weeks after the introduction of geofencing functions in the city.

The situation, however, took a drastic turn, from having too many bikes to too few bikes when users need them.

Before the new regulation kicked in last July, GBikes, oBike and ShareBikeSG ceased operations. Operators cited difficulties in meeting the licence requirements and financing the business under the new regulations.

Ofo China has announced that it is considering filing for bankruptcy, arousing fear among users over whether they can claim their deposits back from the company.

Disruptive technologies, such as dockless bike-sharing systems, are unlikely to be sufficiently managed by existing regulation regimes. It may upset the status quo and could result in public complaints.

REGULATION THAT SUPPORTS INNOVATION

While some regulation is needed to safeguard public interests, it is worth taking a long-term view, and a more open attitude, to ensure that beneficial innovations have time and space to be tested, take root and mature.

Too much attention is being placed on parking issues, and too little discussion is made on the benefits of dockless bike sharing against its unsustainable business model and fierce competition, and the support needed to grow cycling into a viable mode of transport.

Ofo's bike-trip data reveals how dockless bike sharing has complemented Singapore's public transport system to meet the short-distance travel demands of people. In January last year alone, ofo bikes, then one of the largest operators in Singapore, made 2.4 million trips in the city, averaging 77,400 trips daily.

A substantial 36.6 per cent of all trips started or ended at, or in close proximity to, public transport nodes such as bus stops, and MRT and LRT stations. More trips were undertaken in towns with good provision of cycling infrastructure and planned park connector networks, such as Punggol, Tampines, Admiralty and Sengkang.

These trips served wide-ranging travel needs, from commuting during rush hours, to recreational uses on weekends.

Unlike public transport services, shared bikes are not limited by operating hours, planned routes or catchments.

Approximately 10 per cent of ofo's total usage in January last year were made between the late evenings and early mornings; 54 per cent of these trips ended at residential areas and had a longer average duration. It offers a viable alternative in areas with relatively limited public transport coverage, such as the western industrial areas.

As Singapore continues to develop and grow, we are likely to see greater demands on mobility services. Other mobility options such as bike sharing, car sharing, and mobility-as-a-service are gaining popularity.

If cities deem bike sharing to be an important transport mode, long-term and well-thought-out strategies are needed to define cycling's position in the transportation system and formulate supporting policies.

HOW OTHER CITIES MANAGE BIKE SHARING

Bike sharing could be an opportunity to adopt new visions and planning practices for cities.

It also takes collaboration between the government, the private sector and the public to plan, regulate and adapt to the new service model. In Hangzhou, China, the local authorities proposed a ratio of one employee for every 80 bikes. Such maintenance staff will manage the assets, redistribute bikes and remove errantly parked or damaged bikes from the streets.

In Tokyo, bike-sharing operators cooperated with companies with available parking spaces and local retailers such as convenience stores and fast-food chains such as McDonald's and Starbucks to establish dedicated bike-parking spaces on their premises. Tokyo's experience demonstrates that cooperation within a larger ecosystem can create win-win situations.

The public should be involved, too. In the US city of Chicago, public outreach programmes were carried out to publicise the rationale for the bike-sharing scheme, with details such as its purpose, how users can participate, expected issues and responses to frequently asked questions. New York City set up dedicated community feedback channels to gather public comments on its shared-bike pilot programme.

Therefore, a collaborative and experimental approach involving progressive, flexible and supportive regulations should be adopted to allow new innovations to grow.

At the same time, stakeholders could adopt a more welcoming attitude towards innovations, and demonstrate a willingness to use them in a responsible manner.

Forecaster and writer Anthony Townsend once pointed out: Technology for a smart city won't work unless there are two other key ingredients – both the people in government and the population need to buy into its value proposition. There needs to be a more widespread appreciation of both the benefits and the limitations of technology.

stopinion@sph.com.sg

• Zhou Yimin is a senior assistant director and Xu Yuting is a researcher at the Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development.

Fear of March madness looms over Davos

Gideon Rachman

DAVOS • Two questions come up repeatedly in the corridors of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos. First, what is going to happen in the United States-China trade war? Second, what is going to happen with Brexit?

There are considerable similarities between these two questions. In both cases, the only sensible answer is some variant of "I don't know". In both cases, there is a strong possibility of a bad "no-deal" outcome that could create turmoil in the world economy. And, in both cases, the answer will be revealed in March.

The Trump administration has set a deadline of March 1 for the US to reach a new trade deal with China. Without an agreement, the US has pledged to raise its import tariffs on US$200 billion (S$272 billion) worth of Chinese goods to 25 per cent, from the current 10 per cent level.

The deadline for Britain to leave the European Union is March 29. Without a deal, the default position is that there will be a "no-deal Brexit" – in which Britain will crash out of the EU, leading to the immediate imposition of tariffs, the lapse of existing legal agreements and a surge in red-tape and regulations.

Both "no-deal" scenarios are regarded with almost universal horror by the mix of businessmen, financiers, politicians, regulators, academics, celebrities, hustlers and fantasists who jostle one another in the corridors of the Davos Congress Centre. Their fear is that a surge in protectionism and business uncertainty could occur simultaneously in Europe and the US – leading the global economy into a recession, or worse.

But because the two "no deals" are regarded as so dangerous, the consensus opinion in Davos is that somehow – in both cases – a compromise will be found.

The government shutdown in the US has meant that the high-powered Trump administration delegation that was originally scheduled to travel to Davos has instead remained in Washington.

But, appearing by video-link, Mr Mike Pompeo, the US Secretary of State, claimed to be optimistic that a trade deal could be reached.



An anti-Brexit protester in London. There is some concern that Britain will crash out of the European Union without a deal by the Brexit deadline of March 29. PHOTO: DPA

However, the conditions that he laid out for a lasting improvement in US-China relations included Beijing accepting not only "fair trade", but also "free and open seas" and the "principles of democracy".

If that is what it will take to calm things down between Washington and Beijing, it could be a long wait.

China's Vice-President Wang Qishan did make a personal appearance in Davos. But his comments in the Congress Centre were anodyne and, occasionally, mystifying.

The one truly pointed remark was when Mr Wang insisted that all countries "should refrain from seeking technological hegemony" – a reference to Beijing's fear that the US is intent on blocking China's efforts to assume leadership in the industries of the future, including mobile technology, robotics, biotechnology and artificial intelligence.

The conventional view in Davos remains that "reason" will prevail and that the most economically destructive scenarios will be averted. However, a clear lesson of recent years is that there is a large and growing gap between what Davos regards as rational and what the voters in the West regard as reasonable.

For the many Davos-goers, the central question is whether the Trump administration will indeed insist that China make fundamental changes to its industrial policy and its approach to intellectual property, as part of a new trade deal.

If that is the White House's line, few people believe that such concessions will be forthcoming – certainly not by March 1.

But many observers in Davos believe that Mr Donald Trump is already under intense pressure from both US business and the financial markets not to intensify the trade war. If that is the case, the expectation (or hope) is that the administration may settle for some figleaf concessions, in return for freezing tariffs at their current levels of 10 per cent.

These figleaf concessions might include Chinese commitments to raise their purchases of US goods and to drop the retaliatory tit-for-tat measures that China has imposed on America – for example, on US exports of soya beans.

The search for a figleaf is also regarded as central to the resolution of Brexit.

Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May – like Mr Trump – had to scrap a planned appearance in Davos, in favour of dealing with her domestic difficulties. In any case, the complexities of the Irish backstop and British parliamentary procedure are lost on most Davos delegates.

Nonetheless, the widespread assumption at the WEF is that no-deal will be averted. British conference-goers are frequently button-holed with questions about the possibility of a second EU referendum that could reverse Brexit. This is frequently followed by a sorrowful statement, along the lines of: "It's all such a tragedy."

Among those (mostly from Europe) who are following Brexit more closely, there are discussions of the various options that are also doing the rounds in Britain – such as an extension of the March 29 deadline, or some tweak to the backstop that might persuade the British Parliament to approve the UK-EU deal, negotiated by Mrs May.

Everybody knows that time is running out on both Brexit and US-China trade. But the conventional view in Davos remains that "reason" will prevail and that the most economically destructive scenarios will be averted.

However, a clear lesson of recent years is that there is a large and growing gap between what Davos regards as rational and what the voters in the West regard as reasonable.

If that gap did not exist, Mrs Hillary Clinton would now be US president and Britain still would be firmly anchored inside the EU.

This gulf between the expectations of Davos and the political realities of the outside world should be a warning. The chances of two "no-deals" in March are higher than the markets and mainstream opinion realise.

FINANCIAL TIMES

Think-tanks' challenge: How to avoid being tools of foreign govts

Yoichi Funabashi

TOKYO • The Brookings Institution in Washington – perhaps the world's top think-tank – is under scrutiny for receiving six-figure donations from Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei, which many consider to be a security threat. And since the barbaric murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi last October, many other Washington-based think-tanks have come under pressure to stop accepting donations from Saudi Arabia.

These recent controversies have given rise to a narrative that Washington-based think-tanks are facing a funding crisis. In fact, traditional think-tanks are confronting three major challenges that have put them in a uniquely difficult situation.

Not only are they facing increased competition from for-profit think-tanks such as the McKinsey Global Institute and the Eurasia Group, they also must negotiate rising geopolitical tensions, especially between the United States and China. And complicating matters further, many citizens, goaded by populist harangues, have become dismissive of "experts" and the fact-based analyses that think-tanks produce (or at least should produce).

With respect to the first challenge, Professor Daniel Drezner of Tufts University argues in The Ideas Industry: How Pessimists, Partisans, And Plutocrats Are Transforming The Marketplace Of Ideas that for-profit think-tanks have engaged in thought leadership by operating as platforms for provocative thinkers who push big ideas.

Whereas many non-profit think-tanks – as well as universities and non-governmental organisations – remain "old-fashioned" in their approach to data, their for-profit counterparts thrive by finding the one statistic that captures public attention in the digital age.

Given their access to both public and proprietary information, for-profit think-tanks are also able to maximise the potential of big data in ways that traditional think-tanks cannot.

Moreover, with the space for balanced foreign-policy arguments narrowing, think-tanks are at risk of becoming tools of geopolitical statecraft. This is especially true now that US-China relations are deteriorating and becoming more ideologically tinged.

Over time, foreign governments of all stripes have cleverly sought to influence policymaking not only in Washington, but also in London, Brussels, Berlin, and elsewhere, by becoming significant donors to think-tanks.

Governments realise that the well-connected think-tanks that act as "power brokers" vis-a-vis the political establishment have been facing fund-raising challenges since the 2008 financial crisis. In some cases, locally based think-tanks have even been accused of becoming fronts for foreign authoritarian governments.

In terms of shadowy influence-peddling, China's actions have been particularly concerning.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has explicitly encouraged his country's think-tanks to "advance the Chinese narrative" globally. And in many cases, China-based think-tanks have become instruments for expanding the country's sphere of influence.

According to a report by the European Council on Foreign Relations, China's Belt and Road Initiative, with its need for complex coordination, has created the perfect policy space for think-tanks that "tell a good China story" to prosper. These include networks such as SiLKS and individual think-tanks such as the Charhar Institute, which also recently established a "National Committee for China-US Relations". Given their links to the Chinese government, these organisations threaten to muddy the waters in which genuinely independent think-tanks operate.

But the most significant threat to think-tanks is coming from the global populist backlash against "experts" and evidence-based research.

As Mr Michael D. Rich and Dr Jennifer Kavanagh of the Rand Corporation have argued, we are currently living through a period of "truth decay". The line between fact and opinion has become blurred, and people have increasingly grown distrustful of respected sources of information and data.

Populist politicians have both exploited and accelerated this phenomenon, by depicting experts as "enemies of the people" and think-tanks as "ivory institutions" that are out of touch with the concerns of everyday citizens. These pressures are combining to erode civil discourse, critical thinking, and thus the foundations of liberal democracies.

To survive, traditional think-tanks must innovate while staying true to their principles. As a start, they should draw on their unique power to convene thinkers from across the political spectrum.

By creating a forum for members of civil society to debate major policy issues, think-tanks can help to build a consensus and encourage cross-party cooperation.

The need for think-tanks to reaffirm their core purpose of validating evidence-based arguments has never been more urgent.

Whereas corporate interests often sway the conclusions of for-profit think-tanks, non-profit think-tanks can and must offer independent and accurate analyses to help the public understand an increasingly complex world.

Think-tanks also should maximise the potential of technology to unmask authoritarian influence. As matters stand, the shortage of information about authoritarian governments benefits such regimes.

One promising model for addressing this problem is the Centre for Strategic and International Studies' Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, which has used satellite imagery to track and expose China's militarisation and construction of artificial islands in the South China Sea.

Finally, governments of like-minded democracies must come together to protect the status of independent think-tanks as a vital pillar of the liberal order.

Even in hard financial times, when supporting independent research may seem like a luxury, the role of think-tanks in promoting evidence-based policymaking is indispensable.

Let us not forget that think-tanks emerge and thrive during times of crisis. Just as World War I gave rise to the Council on Foreign Relations and Chatham House, the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster led to the formation of the Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation (now the Asia Pacific Initiative, which I lead).

At the end of the day, there can be no liberal international order without critical policy debates. The contributions of think-tanks are vital to those debates' success.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

• Yoichi Funabashi is chairman of the Asia Pacific Initiative (formerly the Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation), a Tokyo-based independent think-tank.

Can we make artificial intelligence ethical?

Stephen A. Schwarzman

I am not an engineer. Or a coder. Or a scientist.

But I am someone who has spent years looking at companies and industries to see which are poised for growth and which are on the decline. And one thing I see every day is that most companies and industries are about to be transformed, if they haven't been already, by artificial intelligence (AI).

AI will reshape the world in ways we can't imagine, much as the printing press and the Internet did at their inceptions.

That means the United States must remain the lead player in AI if it is to guarantee its future in a competitive global economy. Already, many countries are investing heavily in artificial intelligence, and the US, too, has made great progress.

But this is a moment that calls for America's unique capacity for leadership, not just in advancing the technology, but also in preparing for the ethical questions and disruptions AI will create.

Too often, we think only about increasing competitiveness in terms of advancing the technology. But the effort can't just be about making AI more powerful. It must also be about making sure AI has the right impact.

AI's greatest advocates describe the utopian promise of a technology that will save lives, improve health and predict events we previously couldn't anticipate. AI's detractors warn of a dystopian nightmare in which AI rapidly replaces human beings at many jobs and tasks.

If we want to realise AI's incredible potential, we must also advance AI in a way that increases the public's confidence that AI benefits society. We must have a framework for addressing the impacts and the ethics.

What does an ethics-driven approach to AI look like? It means asking not only whether AI can be used in certain circumstances, but also should it?

Companies must take the lead in addressing key ethical questions surrounding AI. This includes exploring how to avoid biases in AI algorithms that can prejudice the way machines and platforms learn and behave and when to disclose the use of AI to consumers, how to address concerns about AI's effect on privacy and responding to employee fears about AI's impact on jobs.

As academic Thomas H. Davenport and Deloitte principal Vivek Katyal argue in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Sloan Management Review, we must also recognise that AI often works best with humans instead of by itself. That's especially true in cases in which human judgments are necessary to identify content that is "inappropriate", or areas such as marketing where companies must ensure AI doesn't inadvertently apply biases. These situations benefit from people who are "bilingual", marrying AI fluency with expertise in fields as varied as history and cross-cultural communication.

And then, of course, there's the question of workforce disruption.

Trucking and ride-sharing companies, for example, will be among the first to take advantage of self-driving vehicles. What, then, about the drivers, owners and operators (who number at least 3.5 million in trucking alone)?

An ethics-driven approach would seek to understand and develop new opportunities as the demand for drivers declines.

An ethical approach to AI requires coming up with a long-term understanding of the values we want to see reflected in this technology – and shaping rules that create confidence that AI's applications will reflect those values. Those values and rules will be found at the intersection of ethics, law and international relations; they won't come from Silicon Valley alone, which is understandably devoted to the power of the technology itself. But universities – full of critical thinkers, insulated from short-term market pressures and focused on big ideas – are the proper place for advancing the technology and the implications they bring.

The federal government will need to provide significant increases in funding for AI to help the US maintain its technical edge and step up its coordinating role in the ethics and workplace arenas.

We have seen this collaborative model work very well before, from the Human Genome Project to the early days of the Internet.

This is the key reason I helped conceptualise and provide foundational funding for the new College of Computing at MIT in Boston. MIT and other universities are best positioned to employ a multidisciplinary approach to AI that is focused on the ethical application of its uses in the real world.

The sooner we come to an understanding of AI that ensures its powerful capabilities are a net positive for people and workers, the more wisely we can develop and deploy it. And the more talented young people from all disciplines we train to think critically about AI, the more the US can guarantee its leadership in this vital area for the long term.

WASHINGTON POST

• Stephen A. Schwarzman is chairman, chief executive and co-founder of investment firm Blackstone.

An ethical approach to AI requires coming up with a long-term understanding of the values we want to see reflected in this technology – and shaping rules that create confidence that AI's applications will reflect those values.

BIG PICTURE

WEATHER
Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
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24-hr PSI as of 6pm yesterday: 52 to 60 (Moderate)

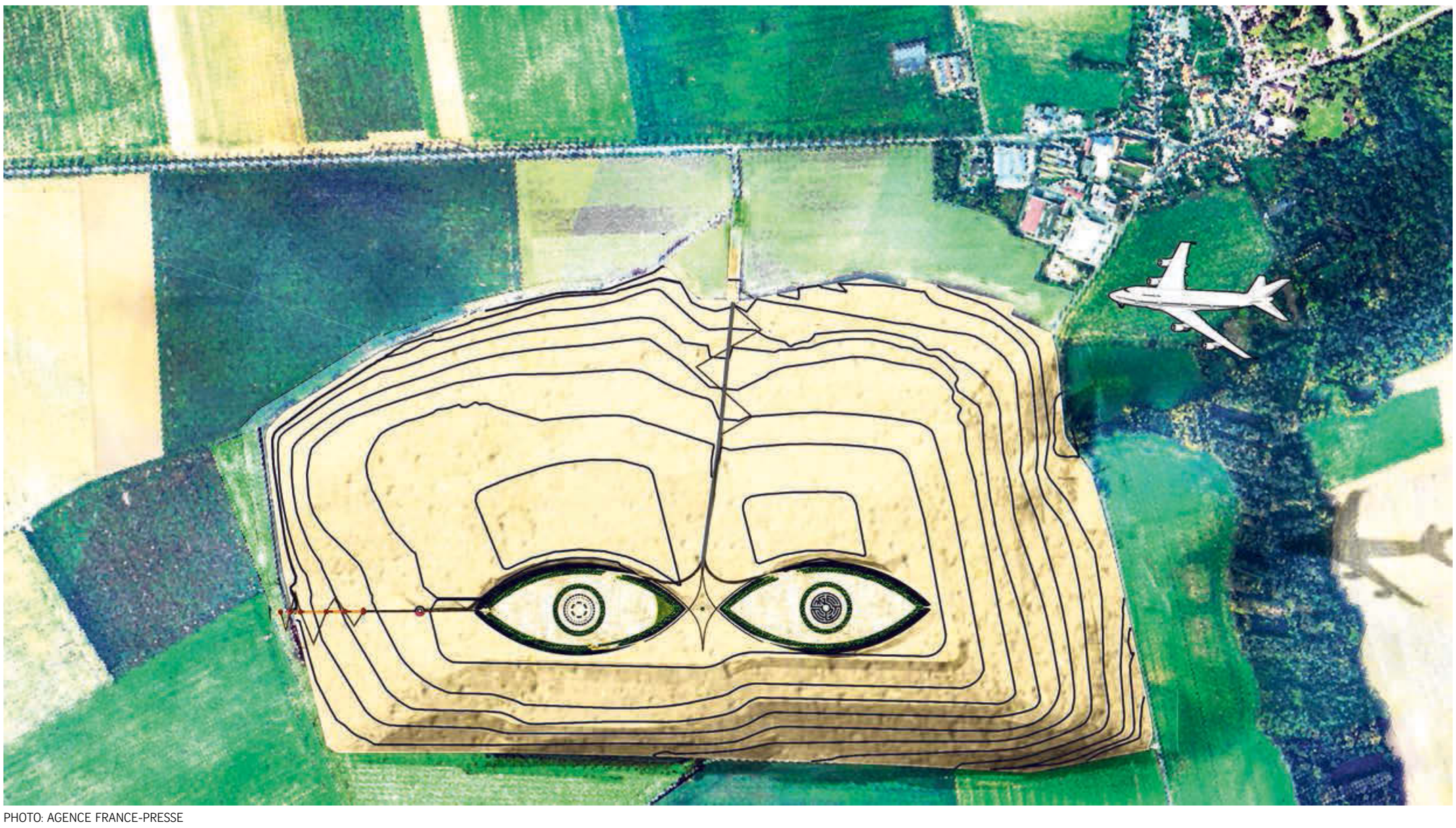


PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

All eyes on art project

Passengers landing at the Charles de Gaulle Airport from 2024 may not believe their eyes when they look out the window.

The above sketch depicts the "Les Yeux du ciel", or "Eyes of the Sky", land art project designed by French architect and urbanist Antoine Grumbach, with the support of ECT, in Villeneuve-sous-Dammartin near the French capital.

Work on the gigantic cultural and environmental project starts today. According to Le Journal du Dimanche, it will be built on a hill of earth excavated from construction sites, with the outline of each 400m-long eye formed by planting trees, and the insides of the eyes filled in using white stones.

The project, situated on the landing routes of the Charles de Gaulle Airport, is scheduled to be completed in time for the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

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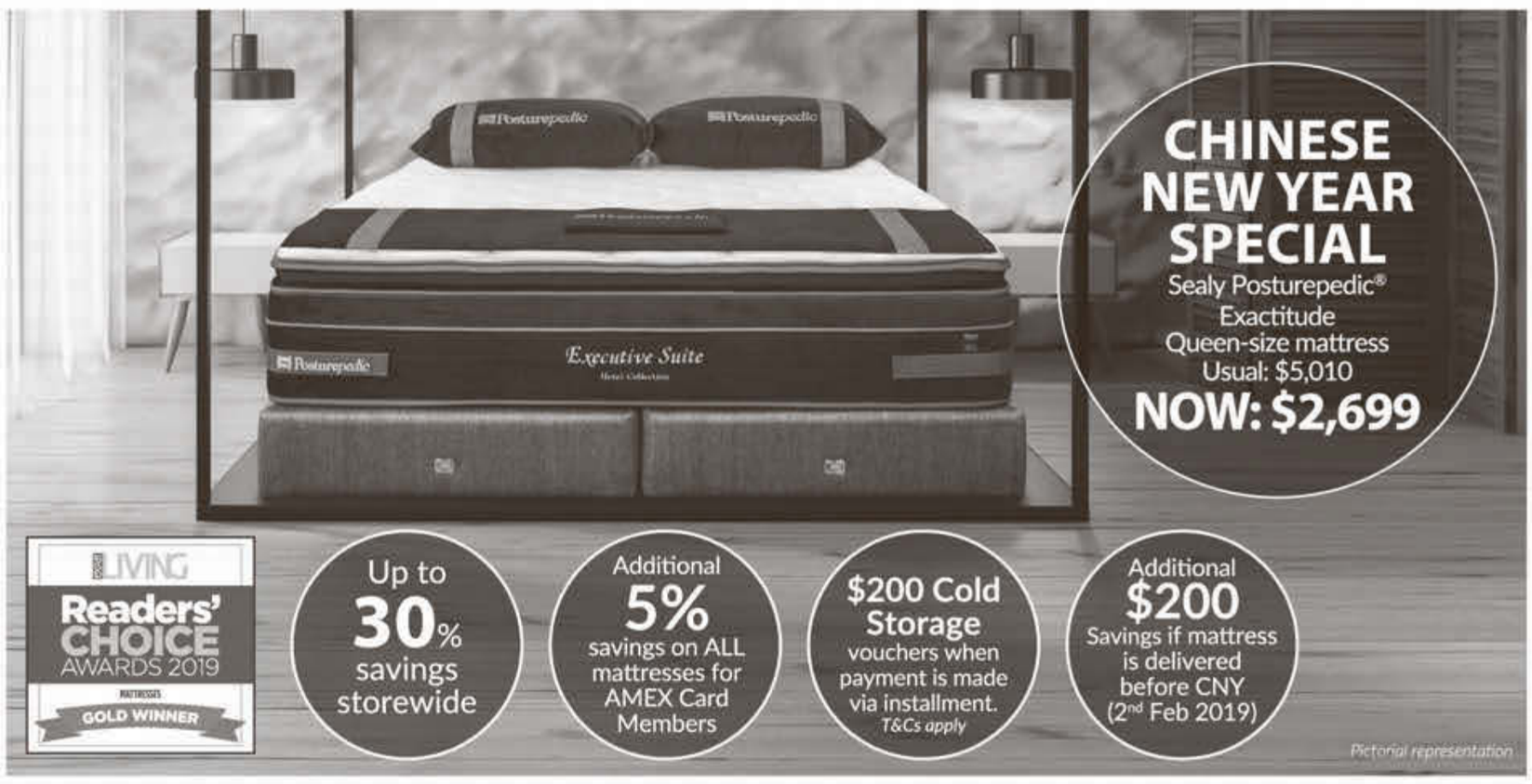
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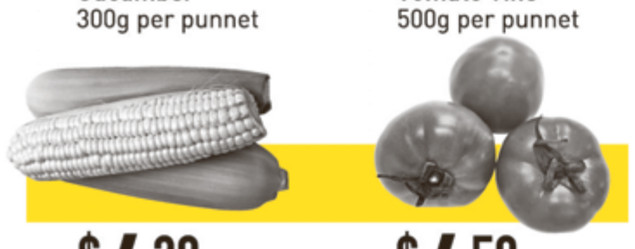
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10	KING DRAGON Sea Asparagus (425g)	$10.80/can
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13	CHURCHVIEW Estate Range Shiraz 750ml (UP: $41.80)	$37.60/bot
14	HAPPS I Series Chenin Blanc 750ml (UP: $42.00)	$37.80/bot
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3	TASTE ORIGINAL Organic Mee Suar (10 Grain/Pumpkin/Spinach) 300g (UP: $4.50)	$3.90/pack
4	ORIGINS HEALTHFOOD Prosperity Noodles 600g (UP: $5.70)	$4.90/pack
5	CHANG Organic Brown Rice (Assorted) 2kg (UP: $10.20)	$9.50/pack



A	YES NATURAL Chilli Padi Sauce 500ml (UP: $6.50)	$5.85/bot
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Developers get creative to push unsold condos





A buyer of a unit at Kingsford Waterbay (above) won a BMW as part of a lucky draw, while the developer for Mont Botanik Residence offered $50,000 vouchers for Jaguar cars with every unit purchased. PHOTOS: FACEBOOK/ERA PROJECT MARKETING, FACEBOOK/MONT BOTANIK RESIDENCE

They partner distributors to offer customers chance to own luxury cars in effort to meet sector rules

Derek Wong

Buying a condominium may just land the purchaser a car as well, or at least a discount for one.

Developers are getting creative in flogging unsold units, with some offering luxury cars in lucky draws and others giving out cash vouchers for such vehicles.

Until recently, Mont Botanik Residence in the Hillview area was giving out $50,000 vouchers for Jaguar cars for every apartment unit purchased. The Straits Times understands that in the past month or so, the promotion has been replaced by a 3 per cent discount for the apartment units.

After this discount, prices start at around $1.18 million for a two-bedroom unit in the freehold 108-unit condominium, which was launched for sale in the second half of last year.

The project's developer, Tuan Sing Holdings, as well as the distributor for Jaguar, Wearnes Automotive, declined to comment on the collaboration.

Industry observers said partnering a luxury car label is a way to brand the project and, more importantly, helps to attract buyers without lowering prices, which may devalue the condominium.

National University of Singapore real estate professor Sing Tien Foo said the move by Mont Botanik Residence helps to "differentiate the residential development from other mid-range-priced projects in the Hillview area".

"This could be a joint marketing strategy between the car dealer and the developer – both plan to target the same segment of buyers who are able and willing to spend on luxury items, including luxury houses, to allow them to signal their status," he said.

He added that compared with direct cash discounts, such a promotion would enable the developer to avoid revising prices downwards, helping it to set a relatively high price to signal the project's quality.

Property agent Kenny Lee, who specialises in condominium sales and rentals, said: "From a business point of view, it's a win-win situation for both (the car distributor and the developer)."

Some developers go beyond offering vouchers and instead entice buyers with the chance of winning a luxury car.

The developer of Kingsford Waterbay, a 99-year leasehold condominium in Upper Serangoon View completed last month, organised a lucky draw last July for the remaining 30 or so units. The prize was a BMW worth more than $100,000, which a buyer won. All the units were sold by the end of September.

"It was the last few units and they wanted to get them out as soon as possible," said Ms Yvonne Toh, one of the property agents who marketed the project, adding that the last time she saw such a lucky draw for a car in her 10-year career was about eight years back.

There is reason for such a rush: Under Additional Buyer's Stamp Duty rules, developers need to sell all units at new residential developments within five years of buying the site, or pay extension fees to the state.

Since the rules took effect in 2011 to the end of 2017, developers have paid a total of $380 million in fees and charges to the Government for not being able to sell all residential units in their projects within stipulated deadlines.

Mr Nicholas Mak, executive director of real estate consultancy ZACD Group, said these incentives for buyers often appear during market slowdowns, such as during the Asian financial crisis in 1998 and in the aftermath of the dot.com bubble burst in the early 2000s.

Last September, Bloomberg reported a debt-laden developer in China giving away a BMW 3 Series car with each purchase.

But Mr Mak said such a move is unlikely to happen in Singapore. "Cars are so expensive here, it doesn't make sense."

wderek@sph.com.sg

COLLABORATION

This could be a joint marketing strategy between the car dealer and the developer – both plan to target the same segment of buyers who are able and willing to spend on luxury items, including luxury houses, to allow them to signal their status.

PROFESSOR SING TIEN FOO, from the National University of Singapore, who says the move by Mont Botanik Residence helps to "differentiate the residential development from other mid-range-priced projects in the Hillview area".



A report from financial services company Moody's said that competitive pressures from an increasingly crowded market will force local telcos to consolidate over the next three years, noting that Singapore is slated to have at least seven mobile operators this year. ST PHOTO: STEPHANIE YEOW

Telcos here likely to consolidate over next 3 years, say analysts

Sue-Ann Tan

Competitive pressures from an increasingly crowded market will force local telcos to consolidate over the next three years, said analysts this week.

They noted that while Singtel will remain the market leader, its share of industry revenue and the subscriber market could be eroded by newcomers and the price war that will likely eventuate.

The forecast from financial services company Moody's comes amid the arrival of Australian entrant TPG Telecom, which acquired the rights to operate here in 2016 alongside Singtel, M1 and StarHub.

TPG started mobile trials in certain parts of Singapore this month, although the commercial launch of services is likely to be delayed to the second quarter of the year from December last year, the report said.

Moody's noted that Singapore is slated to have at least seven mobile operators this year compared with just three over the past decade.

Three of these are mobile network operators and four are mobile virtual network operators. Virtual network operators do not build their own physical mobile networks but lease them wholesale from existing telcos.

The report, which was released on Tuesday, said: "We expect industry consolidation to take place in the next two to three years, with competition in a saturated market worsened by the arrival of the four low-cost mobile virtual network operators as well as TPG Telecom's commercial launch this year."

The rapid increase in telcos means industry turnover will keep sliding, said Moody's.

"The rapid build-up in competitive pressure in the last two years will lead to continued declines in mobile revenue in Singapore over the next 12 to 24 months, driven by compression in average revenue per user as well as a stagnant subscriber base."

Mr Sachin Mittal, head of telecommunications, media and technology at DBS Group Research, said: "We expect mobile revenue to continue to decline (around) 5 per cent annually due to the rising adoption of SIM-only plans and consumers to benefit from lower prices."

Analysts The Straits Times spoke to agreed that the consolidation of telcos is a likely scenario given Singapore's limited consumer base.

Assistant Professor of Finance Aurobindo Ghosh from the Lee Kong Chian School of Business at Singapore Management University said: "With as many as seven players as the report suggests, the market size might be too small for all of them to be profitable. This might lead to severe price competition to capture market share.

"So I think in the medium to long run, for sustainability, existing players will look for strategic partnerships to cater to new demand from fintech services such as digital banking services."

This consolidation is also likely because of the difficulties new telcos might have when entering the market, Prof Ghosh said. "It might be challenging for them without partnerships as well as the fact that existing infrastructure is owned by the existing telcos," he added.

"So with severe price competition, it might not be good for the bottom line for new players to invest heavily on innovation and infrastructure as they will have a harder time getting return on their investment.

"They might have to spend a substantial amount to pay rent to lease existing infrastructure from current telcos. Going forward, I see consolidation for sustainability."

CIMB economist Song Seng Wun said that in the short term, more telcos might enter the market but in the long term, consolidation is likely due to the saturated market. "If it's a market which is growing because the underlying population and consumer base are growing, that will be a different story, but it isn't the case for Singapore," noted Mr Song.

"The population and consumer market is limited. It does not stop new entrants and it might be the case that now there are more telcos, but later, consolidation is very possible and likely because of the market size."

suetan@sph.com.sg

MAS warns coin offering issuer over Securities Act breach

Grace Leong
Business Correspondent

The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) has warned an initial coin offering (ICO) issuer it should not proceed with its securities token offering in Singapore until it can fully comply with regulatory requirements under the Securities and Futures Act (SFA).

The Straits Times understands that the ICO issuer is Jules Corp, a Singapore-based education-software technology company. The company did not respond when contacted yesterday.

This is the second time MAS has issued such a warning. In May last year, the financial regulatory authority warned eight digital token exchanges in Singapore not to facilitate trading in digital tokens that are securities or futures contracts without the regulator's authorisation. At the time, it had also warned another ICO issuer to stop the offering of its digital tokens here.

According to the MAS announcement yesterday, the issuer had intended to rely on an exemption under the SFA, which allows an issuer to make an offer of securities to accredited investors without registering a prospectus with MAS. The exemption from prospectus registration is, however, subject to certain conditions, including a requirement not to advertise the offer.

The issuer in this case failed to comply with the advertising restriction when its legal advisers put out a LinkedIn post accessible to the public calling attention to the offer. Thus, the issuer would not be able to rely on the exemption from prospectus registration. The issuer has suspended its global offering of securities tokens.

The Straits Times understands that the legal advisers are Duane Morris & Selvam LLP. When contacted yesterday, the law firm did not respond.

Mr Lee Boon Ngiap, assistant managing director (Capital Markets) at MAS, said: "Where an offer is made to the public, a prospectus is required to ensure that investors are provided with all the information to make informed investment decisions. Some offers may be made without a prospectus if they are limited to a restricted group of persons or to those who have the means to look after their own interests. Such offers are subject to strict conditions such as advertising restrictions. MAS will not hesitate to act if issuers contravene the disclosure requirements under the SFA."

For digital token offerings, MAS reminded investors that the risks include a highly speculative valuation, heightened risk of fraud and lack of a proven track record, which makes it difficult for investors to establish the credibility of such offerings.

US law firm Gibson Dunn & Crutcher partner Robson Lee said: "The issuers of security tokens invariably do not have the requisite management and financial track records unlike traditional IPOs. Investors should not buy on hope, hold in greed and subsequently come to grief when their investments 'evaporate' because the underlying business is not sustainable, or unlikely to be profitable."

gleong@sph.com.sg

For digital token offerings, MAS reminded investors that the risks include a highly speculative valuation, heightened risk of fraud and lack of a proven track record, which makes it difficult for investors to establish the credibility of such offerings.

Glitzy CBD buildings mask rental woes

75% of landlords in poll find it hard to retain tenants amid cheaper options with newer amenities

Ng Jun Sen
Business Correspondent



The Landlord Sentiment Survey, conducted by Colliers International and released yesterday, found that landlords in the CBD are feeling the bite of worsening economic factors and competition from recently completed commercial developments, including those that boast lower prices and the latest amenities. ST FILE PHOTO

The plush glass and steel office buildings in the prime central business district (CBD) might appear gleaming from the outside but landlords are struggling to hold on to their tenants.

With ageing buildings and dated amenities, some tenants may be wondering why rents in the CBD are still higher than office space in other parts of Singapore.

Around 75 per cent of landlords said they found it challenging to retain tenants, stating that they feel the bite of worsening economic factors and competition from recently completed commercial developments, including those that boast lower prices and the latest amenities, a study has found.

The first-ever Landlord Sentiment Survey, which was conducted by real estate services firm Colliers International and released yesterday, polled landlords whose properties represent more than half of the premium and grade A stock in the CBD.

Respondents said 75 per cent of their buildings have a vacancy rate of under 10 per cent, although they said 15 per cent of their buildings had vacancies of more than 30 per cent.

But the vacancy situation is improving – premium and grade A office vacancy rates have fallen by 2.5 points from its zenith in the second quarter of 2017. Rents have also risen in the same period.

Urban Redevelopment Authority data shows that office rents in the central region have been climbing steadily since a low point in the second quarter of 2017 and rose 2.5 per cent in the third quarter of last year compared with the preceding quarter.

Renting a grade A office last year will cost an average of $9.43 per sq ft a month, around twice the rent of an office space in a new commercial building in the suburbs.

"Pricing will always be an important aspect of any tenant attraction and retention strategy whether it is in a tenants' or landlords' market," said Colliers Singapore head of occupier services Rick Thomas.

"In a rising market where premium and grade A CBD rents are inching up, some occupiers may consider leasing lower-priced office space in the city fringe and suburbs, or even in business parks if they meet the eligibility criteria."

He added that the CBD's limited availability of large contiguous space can hinder a landlord's ability to meet a tenant's expansion demands.

This, coupled with the fact that new developments appearing in the last two years now come with the hottest amenities, means landlords in the CBD have to do more to retain tenants, the survey noted.

The survey also found that tenants aspire to have certain key attributes, such as enhanced technology, more sustainability features and higher efficiency. Many of them also want a better user experience, including end-of-trip facilities to support cyclists and joggers, such as showers and bicycle parking.

Providing a flexible workspace is also a growing priority for landlords. Including recently signed leases, Colliers estimates that flexible workspace operators will take up 2.7 million sq ft of space in the CBD – or 5 per cent of the total office stock in the city centre.

Mr Duncan White, head of office services at Colliers, said: "Landlords and developers need to keep their finger on the pulse of the ever-changing fundamentals in the office market."

ngjunsen@sph.com.sg

Industrial rents, prices flat in fourth quarter: JTC

Rental rates and prices of industrial space remained unchanged in the fourth quarter of last year over the preceding three months.

Prices were also unchanged from the same period last year while rents eased 0.3 per cent.

Occupancy rates in the overall industrial property market rose 0.2 percentage point to 89.3 per cent in the final three months of 2018 over the previous quarter, and gained 0.4 percentage point year on year.

Industrialists looking to own production space have plenty of choice with about 60 units totalling 22,000 sq m in uncompleted strata-titled developments on sale as of Dec 31, according to industrial land agency JTC Corp yesterday.

JTC said that based on the number of caveats lodged for industrial properties, the transaction volume in the fourth quarter was down 5 per cent from the previous quarter, but up 34 per cent year on year.

This year, 1.5 million sq m of industrial space, including 303,000 sq m in multiple-user factories, is estimated to come on stream – about 3 per cent of the current industrial stock.

By comparison, the average annual increase in industrial space over the past three years was around 1.4 million sq m, with demand coming in at around 1.1 million sq m.

"With more supply coming on stream, it will continue to support the expansion plans of industrialists," JTC said.

Invest now in Studio and 1-Bedroom units in Japan





EXHIBITION

26 January 2019 (Saturday) • 11am - 7pm
Regent Hotel, Tanglin III Room, Level 2

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

Widya Lesta
M +65 8282 3473
CEA Reg No. R016997A

Marilyn Tan
M +65 8812 9298
CEA Reg No. R031122J

Clarice Lau
M +65 8586 1987
CEA Reg No: R058170H

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MAS tweaks rules on general offers for firms with dual-class shares

The rules surrounding companies with dual-class shares have been tweaked to clarify the role of independent shareholders and to align offer prices between different classes of investors.

Independent investors will now not be required to make a general offer if their share of voting rights is pushed past regulatory thresholds under certain circumstances.

A general offer for a dual-class share firm must also present the same offer price for multiple voting shares as for ordinary voting shares, according to the new rules outlined by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) yesterday.

The original takeover code lays out certain thresholds that oblige a shareholder to make a mandatory general offer for the company.

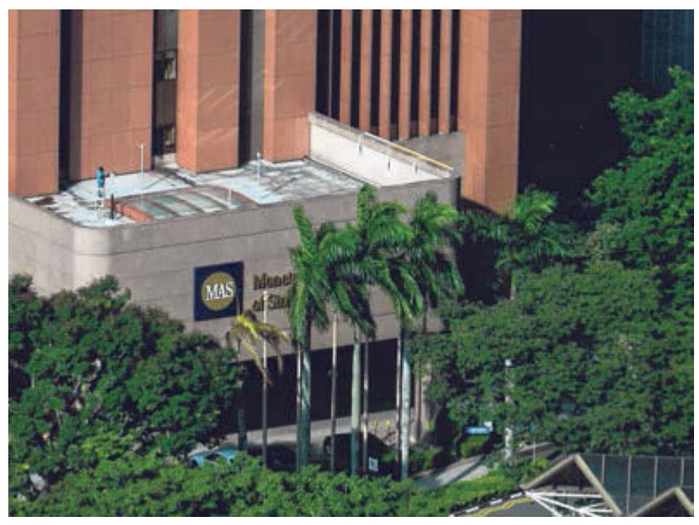
For example, when an investor's control is first increased to 30 per cent or more, that shareholder must offer to buy the rest of the shares not already owned.

But in a dual-class company, there are two scenarios when a shareholder's control might cross the threshold.

The first is when shares that carry multiple votes are converted into ordinary voting shares.

Take a firm that has one superior share that carries five votes and five common shares carrying one vote each. That firm would have a total of 10 voting rights. If the superior share is converted into one common share, that firm's total voting rights would be cut to just six.

For an investor with two common shares, such an event would push his interest from 20 to 33 per cent, which would normally trigger a general offer.



MAS has set out two scenarios when independent investors will not have to make general offers if their interest in a dual-class firm crosses the regulatory takeover threshold. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

The other circumstance in which a shareholder's stake might cross the threshold is when a company cuts the number of voting rights per multiple voting share. Such an event could push an investor's interest past the mandatory general offer threshold.

The new rule clarifies that a shareholder whose interest crosses the mandatory general offer threshold as a result of either of those scenarios will not need to make a mandatory general offer as long as the investor is deemed to be independent of the conversion or reduction event.

The obligation will still be waived if the shareholder is not deemed to be independent, provided that he or she takes steps to reduce the voting rights to below the mandatory general offer thresholds, or if the shareholder obtains a waiver from independent shareholders.

In another move, the MAS said the requirement for offer prices to be the same between multiple and ordinary voting shares would provide greater certainty.

It would also act as a safeguard for people with ordinary voting shares by ensuring that any premium paid to holders of multiple voting shares are also paid to those with ordinary shares.

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CAR OF THE YEAR
2018

Over 80 cars go head on once again for the highly sought-after Car of the Year title in the ninth edition of sgCarMart's Annual Awards.

From newcomers like the Skoda Octavia to heart-thumping, high-performance models like the BMW M5 Sedan, sgCarMart's Car of the Year 2018 celebrates the best in Singapore's automotive industry over the last 12 months.

Which cars have won? Find out at
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CAR OF THE YEAR
KIA STINGER



COMPACT HATCHBACK OF THE YEAR
HONDA JAZZ RS



HATCHBACK OF THE YEAR
VOLKSWAGEN GOLF



SEDAN OF THE YEAR
ŠKODA OCTAVIA



FAMILY SEDAN OF THE YEAR
MAZDA 6



SPORT SEDAN OF THE YEAR
KIA STINGER



MPV OF THE YEAR
MAXUS G10 EXECUTIVE



SUV OF THE YEAR
ŠKODA KODIAQ



COMPACT CROSSOVER OF THE YEAR
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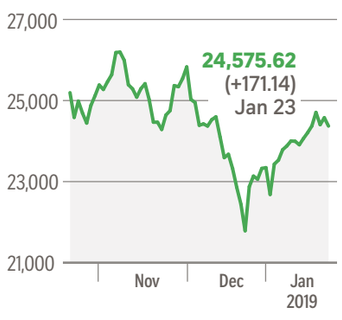
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BullsAndBears

STI up on stronger sentiment, Wall St gains

Market buoyed by strong earnings performances in US

Leila Lai

Local stocks finally found positive territory this week with local investors cheered by overnight gains on Wall Street.

The better mood sent the Straits Times Index (STI) up 19.62 points or 0.62 per cent to 3,190.73.

Traders seized on strong earnings performances in the United States, although there was precious little else for them to go on with silence on the US-China trade war and the government shutdown.

Turnover was 1.45 billion shares worth $1.02 billion with gainers and losers evenly matched, 198 to 184.

Jardine Matheson Holdings surprised investors early on with an 83 per cent plunge that wiped out US$41 billion (S$55.8 billion) in share value. About 167,500 shares were transacted in pre-market trading at US$10.99, compared with Wednesday's close of US$66.47. Bloomberg data said the trading volume was almost 60 times the 20-day average for that time of day.

The Singapore Exchange said the orders were not due to "fat finger" errors or any malfunctioning systems and that it would not be cancelling the trades. The shares quickly recovered and traded higher to close at US$66.82, up 0.53 per cent on the day.

Genting Singapore topped active counters with 54.5 million shares traded. The casino operator lost 2.75 per cent to $1.06, one of only three STI constituents to dip.

CapitaLand Commercial Trust was another active, rising 1.09 per cent to $1.85 on volume of 13.7 million. The trust reported higher distribution per unit yesterday for the fourth quarter, on the back of higher net property income.

Mapletree Commercial Trust gained 2.91 per cent to $1.77 after 8.2 million units changed hands. It reported better third-quarter numbers on Wednesday. OCBC Investment Research downgraded the trust to "hold" yesterday on limited upside potential, noting that its unit price has appreciated 5.5 per cent since the bank initiated coverage in November with a "buy" call.

Meanwhile, DBS Group Research retains its "buy" call on the trust.

"Detractors believe that MCT is due for a de-rating given the threat of e-commerce that can affect earnings at VivoCity," analysts Mervin Song and Derek Tan said. "However, this ignores management's ability to undertake asset enhancement initiatives to partially future-proof the mall."

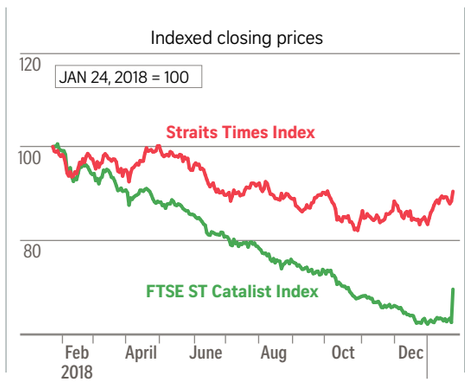
Sino Grandness Food retreated 30.1 per cent to 7.2 cents with 8.08 million shares traded. The canned goods producer said on Wednesday night it had been served another letter of demand over a sum of about US$22 million. Lender Soleado Holdings wants payment in two weeks.

leilal@sph.com.sg

DAILY

Straits Times Index

Jan 24, 2019
3,190.73 ▲
+19.62 (+0.62%)
Current streak
1 day
Day high
3,190.73
Day low
3,153.61
52-week high
3,615.28 (May 2, 2018)
52-week low
2,966.45 (Oct 30, 2018)



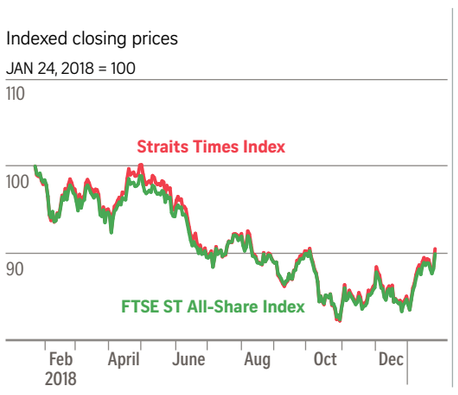
FTSE ST Catalist Index

Jan 24, 2019
▼ **305.53**
-4.18 (-1.35%)
Current streak
1 day
Day high
309.69
Day low
304.59
52-week high
490.47 (Jan 29, 2018)
52-week low
303.76 (Jan 3, 2019)

DAILY

FTSE ST All-Share Index

Jan 24, 2019
▲ **774.22**
+4.89 (+0.64%)
Current streak
1 day
Day high
774.22
Day low
766.32
52-week high
877.87 (Jan 24, 2018)
52-week low
722.91 (Oct 30, 2018)



SGX's Q2 net profit jumps 9.2%

The thriving derivatives market helped bourse operator Singapore Exchange boost second-quarter earnings, it reported yesterday.

Net profit came in at $96.5 million for the three months to Dec 31, up 9.2 per cent on the $88.4 million recorded a year earlier.

Operating profit was $113.7 million, up 10.4 per cent, while expenses rose 8.3 per cent to $110.5 million, mainly due to higher staff costs and professional fees.

Revenue improved 9.3 per cent to $224.16 million.

Equities and fixed-income revenue fell 12 per cent to $85.6 million and accounted for 38 per cent of total turnover.

Derivatives revenue increased 35 per cent to $112.9 million, making up 50 per cent of total turnover. Revenue from market data and connectivity rose 6 per cent to $25.7 million.

Earnings per share for the quarter stood at nine cents compared with 8.2 cents a year earlier.

An interim dividend of 7.5 cents a share has been declared, compared with five cents a year ago.

Net profit rose nearly 5 per cent in the first half to $188 million on the back of a 5.7 per cent rise in revenue to $433 million.

SGX shares closed up 1.2 per cent at $7.50 yesterday.

AT A GLANCE

REVENUE: $224.16 million (+9.3%)

NET PROFIT: $96.5 million (+9.2%)

DIVIDEND PER SHARE: 7.5 cents (interim)

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY TRADED	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit		268	unch	10570	6	1.3
194	161	CapitaCom Trust		185 cd	+2	13650	4.7	1
388	298	CapitaLand		329	+2	10788	3.6	0.7
238	195	CapitaMall Trust		232 cd	+1	14158	4.8	1.1
1359	780	CityDev		903	+9	1738	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro		224	+8	9612	4.6	1.9
3128	2265	DBS Grp		2420	+4	2778	5.9	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US	948	unch	424	2.2	-
139	85.5	Genting Sing		106	-3	54542	3.3	1.7
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res		27	+0.5	15278	3	0.7
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US	25	unch	10403	10.5	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US	699	+4	1773	2.9	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US	6682	+35	430	2.4	0.7
4128	3155	JSH USD	US	3773	+69	626	0.8	0.4
4105	2766	Jardine C&C		3685	+35	363	3.1	1.8
892	567	Keppel Corp		613	+2	1677	3.6	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank		1141	+3	4014	3.2	1.2
573	455	SATS		488	+13	2051	3.7	3.4
836	672	SGX		750	+9	3124	4	8.5
1184	914	SIA		974	+24	2033	4.1	0.8
292	231	SPH		252	+1	1052	5.2	1.1
371	319	ST Engineering		367	+5	2182	4.1	5.4
360	243	Sembcorp Ind		264	-1	4128	1.9	0.7
365	283	Singtel		306	+3	13704	6.7	1.7
94	57.5	ThaiBev		72 cd	-1.5	20066	0.9	3.5
3037	2380	UOB		2590	+24	2139	3.9	1.2
932	591	UOL		663	+6	978	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp		1536	+18	1301	3.9	2
331	297	Wilmar Intl		326	+4	3488	3.1	1
164	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD		136	+3	16507	3.3	1

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY TRADED	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit		268	unch	10570	6	1.3
127	105	Ascott Reit		115	unch	2953	6.2	0.9
77	59	Bumitama Agri		71.5	-0.5	568	1	1.7
185	143	CDL HTrust		155	-1	583	-	1
194	161	CapitaCom Trust		185 cd	+2	13650	4.7	1
388	298	CapitaLand		329	+2	10788	3.6	0.7
238	195	CapitaMall Trust		232 cd	+1	14158	4.8	1.1
169	133	CapitaR China Tr		140	-1	2133	7.2	0.9
1359	780	CityDev		903	+9	1738	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro		224	+8	9612	4.6	1.9
3128	2265	DBS Grp		2420	+4	2778	5.9	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US	948	unch	424	2.2	-
78	59	Far East HTrust		62.5	-0.5	672	-	0.7
197	150	First Resources		171	+2	793	4	2.2
236	211	Frasers Cpt Tr		227 cd	+1	1497	5.3	109.1
116	101	Frasers L&I Tr		108	+1	5796	6.3	1.2
139	85.5	Genting Sing		106	-3	54542	3.3	1.7
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res		27	+0.5	15278	3	0.7
232	167	GuocoLand Ltd		188	+1	182	3.7	0.5
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US	25	unch	10403	10.5	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US	699	+4	1773	2.9	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US	6682	+35	430	2.4	0.7
4128	3155	JSH USD	US	3773	+69	626	0.8	0.4
4105	2766	Jardine C&C		3685	+35	363	3.1	1.8
59	44.5	Kep Infra Tr		52 cd	unch	7136	7.2	1.9
892	567	Keppel Corp		613	+2	1677	3.6	1
130	108	Keppel Reit		117 cd	-1	5685	4.8	0.8
215	151	M1		205	-1	2687	5.6	3.8
273	170	Man Oriental USD	US	194	+7	280	1.5	1.4
177	152	Mapletree Com Tr		177 cd	+5	8205	5.1	1.2
213	184	Mapletree Ind Tr		200 cd	+4	5361	5.9	1.4
137	118	Mapletree Log Tr		137 cd	+4	17078	5.6	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr		121	+2	7110	6.2	0.9
83.5	73	NetLink NBN Tr		78	+1	7616	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank		1141	+3	4014	3.2	1.2
215	136	OUE		146	-1	10	2.1	0.3
92.5	64.5	OUE HTrust		69.5	-0.5	2179	-	0.9
250	157	Olam Intl		180	unch	262	4.2	0.9
60.4	28	Oxley		29	unch	834	5.2	0.8
306	256	ParkwayLife Reit		275	+2	2102	4.9	1.6
121	98	Raffles Medical		112	+1	1256	2	2.6
573	455	SATS		488	+13	2051	3.7	3.4
836	672	SGX		750	+9	3124	4	8.5
1184	914	SIA		974	+24	2033	4.1	0.8
337	220	SIA Engineering		253	unch	115	5.1	1.9
292	231	SPH		252	+1	1052	5.2	1.1
106	98	SPHREIT		102	unch	815	5.4	1.1
371	319	ST Engineering		367	+5	2182	4.1	5.4
360	243	Sembcorp Ind		264	-1	4128	1.9	0.7
281	149	Sembcorp Marine		164	+1	1962	1.2	1.5
58	39	Silverlake Axis		40.5	+0.5	3610	7.4	5.9
147	88.5	SingPost		97.5	-0.5	1925	3.6	1.3
365	283	Singtel		306	+3	13704	6.7	1.7
299	158	StarHub		182	+5	2367	8.8	5.6
78	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit		72.5	+1	5151	6.3	0.8
217	163	Suntec Reit		189 cd	+2	13284	5.3	0.9
94	57.5	ThaiBev		72 cd	-1.5	20066	0.9	3.5
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical		7.4	unch	10359	-	2.7
3037	2380	UOB		2590	+24	2139	3.9	1.2
932	591	UOL		663	+6	978	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp		1536	+18	1301	3.9	2
331	297	Wilmar Intl		326	+4	3488	3.1	1
244	183	Wing Tai		201	unch	411	4	0.5
164	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD		136	+3	16507	3.3	1
190	116	Yanlord Land		128	+1	830	5.3	0.5

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	137	+1	108	7.5	1
70.5	48	Accordia Golf Tr	53.5	+1	500	7.2	0.6
90.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	82.5	+1	2277	-	0.8
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	108	+1	263	5.6	1.3
58.5	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	12.8	unch	2904	50.8	0.2
65	48	Banyan Tree	58.5	unch	312	1.7	0.8
281	115	Best World	268	-1	1018	1.5	9.6
85.5	76	Boustead	80	+1	121	3.8	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	89	-0.5	239	7.9	2.4
658	521	Bukit Sembawang	567	+9	2	3.2	1.2
88	65.5	Cache Log Trust	74	-0.5	1531	9.8	1.1
55	39.5	Centurion	40.5	unch	358	6.2	0.7
168	104	China Aviation	114	-1	431	3.9	1
47.5	29.5	China Everbright	35	unch	100	1.4	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunsine	128	+1	463	2.3	1.4
105	64	Chip Eng Seng	69	-0.5	729	5.8	0.5
53.5	31.5	Cosco	35	-0.5	1471	-	1.5
700	302	Delong	599	-4	15	-	0.6
28	17.5	Duty Free Intl	19.9 cd	-0.6	1075	9.3	1.3
79	67.5	EC World Reit	71.5	-0.5	53	8.4	0.8
59.5	47	ESR-REIT	53 cd	unch	3944	7.3	1.1
142	92	First Reit	102 xd	unch	213	8.4	1
152	134	Frasers Com Tr	146 cd	unch	1854	6.6	0.9
82	66.5	Frasers HTrust	72	+0.5	1123	-	0.9
27.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	19.9	-0.1	593	5	1.2
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	78.5	-0.5	10	2.9	2.4
68.5	52	Health Mgt Intl	54.5	+0.5	28	0.6	5.2
279	73	Hi-P Intl	90	unch	2809	27.8	1.4
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	264	+3	20	4.9	0.6
82.5	71	IREIT Global	73.5	-	-	8.1	1
41.5	18.3	Indofood Agri	20.5	-0.5	379	-	0.2
81	43	Japfa	80.5	+2	3790	0.6	1.5
83	49	KSH	52.5	-	-	4.2	0.9
86.9	53	Kep-KBS Reit USD	68	+3.5	742	-	0.6
148	128	Keppel DC Reit	148 cd	+1	8130	4.9	1.4
188	132	Keppel T&T	186	-1	745	1.9	1.2
11.9	7	KrisEnergy	8.5	unch	10771	-	1
79	44.5	Lian Beng	49	-1.5	735	4.6	0.4
42.5	18	Lippo Malls Tr	21	-0.5	534	16.4	0.8
53	30	MM2 Asia	34	unch	678	-	1.9
98.5	69.5	ManulifeReit USD	84	unch	610	6.6	0.7
120	95	Metro	99	unch	143	5.1	0.6
32	5	Noble	8.1	susp	-	-	-
66.9	45	OUE Com Reit	49	+1	1534	9.5	0.6
68	54	PEC	58	unch	3	3.4	0.6
46	17	POSH	18.5	unch	10	-	0.5
64.5	44.5	Q&M Dental	49.5	unch	13	3.3	3.5
117	55.5	QAF Ltd	72.5	+1	74	6.9	0.8
83	70	RHT HealthTrust	75.5 cd	-1	25003	6	1
124	96	Riverstone	113	unch	8	2	3.7
55	22	SIIC Environment	29.5	-1	141	-	0.5
45	38	Sabana Reit	41	-0.5	311	8.1	0.8
119	90	Sheng Siong	112	unch	751	2.9	6.2
25.5	6.6	Sino Grandness	7.2	-3.1	8081	-	0.1
70.5	56	SoilbuildBizReit	61.5 cd	-0.5	1322	8.6	1
129	80.5	Tianjin ZX USD	85	-1	277	-	0.7
50	32.5	Tuan Sing	38	-0.5	479	1.6	0.5
136	54	UMS	62	+1	1592	8.1	1.5
112	58.5	Valuetronics	68.5	+0.5	977	6.7	156.8
16.8	8.3	Ying Li Intl	12.1	+0.1	2521	-	0.3
53	24	Yoma Strategic	35	-1	1897	0.7	0.9
37.5	16.1	Yongnam	17.5	unch	706	-	0.3

Price and volume movers

	VOL	CLOSE($)	CHANGE	+/-
China Intl	6.9	0.220	-0.180	-45.00
BH Global	54.3	0.075	-0.024	-24.24
Sino Grandness	8,081.9	0.072	-0.031	-30.10
Singapore-eDev	364.6	0.030	-0.008	-21.05
USP Group	27.8	0.080	+0.010	+14.29
Libra	320.0	0.108	-0.011	-9.24
Tung Lok Rest	57.8	0.155	-0.019	-10.92
Viking Offshore	1,005.0	0.007	+0.001	+16.67
Transit Concrete	10.0	0.200	-0.030	-13.04
JCG Investment	23,810.1	0.002	-0.001	-33.33

Shows the stocks with the highest combination of price change and of daily activity relative to the three-month average volume

ETFs

52-Week High	52-Week Low	Counter	Last Sale	+/-	Vol ('000)	Last Quote Buy	Last Quote Sell
116.9	110	ABF SG Bond ETF	112.6	-0.2	23	112.6	113
99	82.5	CIMB APAC Div US$	US87.1	-	-	87.3	88.1
1176	626	CIMBASEAN40 US$	US989	-7	0	982	990
12953	11025	GLD US$	US12090	-76	1	12090	12095
1424	1330	IS ASIA HYG S$D	1367	+2	0	1365	1370
1083	970	IS ASIA HYG US$	US1003	-	100	1003	1006
1074	1002	IS Asia BND US	US1030	+4	2	1025	1030
1016	467	IS MS INDIA US$	US819	-7	80	818	821
108.1	94.4	Lion-Phillip S-REIT	102.1cd	+0.9	427	101.8	102.2
375	302	Nikko AM STI ETF	326	+3	78	325	326
100.6	98.8	NikkoAM SGD IGBond ETF	99.7	-0.1	25	99.6	99.9
88.8	76.3	NikkoAM-STC A_REIT US$	US82.5	-	-	83.4	83.8
148.2	104.7	NikkoAM-STC Asia REIT	113.9	+1	248	113.6	113.9
105.6	99	PHIL SING INC	104.4	+0.2	1	104.3	105
130	93.2	Phll Ap Div Reit US$	US100.4	+0.8	3	99.7	100
366	300	STI ETF	324.5	+2.8	555	323.8	324.5
4256	3373	XT ASX200 US$	US3630	+240	0	-	-
685.5	375.1	XT MSBrazil US$	US517	-	-	514.5	520
2208	1470	XT MSCHINA US$	US1635	+16	0	1635	-
8530	6252	XT MSKorea US$	US6597	-	-	-	-
220.4	154.9	XT MSPHILS US$	US189.3	-	-	184	197
645	530	XT MSPacXJp US$	US551	-	-	574	582
3076	2532	XT MSTaiwan US$	US2581	-	-	2495	-
5292	4210	XT S&P500 US$	US4833	-	-	-	-
4044	2850	XT Vietnam US$	US3020	+18	3	2880	-

Gainers

BY CENTS

	CLOSE	UP	%
JSH USD	3773	93.9	1.9
JMH USD	6682	47.6	0.5
Jardine C&C	3685	35.0	1.0
Great Eastern	2695	30.0	1.1
SIA	974	24.0	2.5
UOB	2590	24.0	0.9
Venture Corp	1536	18.0	1.2
SATS	488	13.0	2.7
UOI	734	11.0	1.5
Man Oriental USD	194	9.5	3.7

BY PERCENTAGE

	CLOSE	%	UP
P5 Capital	1.5	114.3	0.8
Asian Micro	0.4	33.3	0.1
Metal Component	3	30.4	0.7
Rich Capital	0.5	25.0	0.1
AsiaPhos	1.3	18.2	0.2
LifeBrandz	0.7	16.7	0.1
Nam Cheong	0.7	16.7	0.1
Ntegrator Intl	0.7	16.7	0.1
OEL	0.7	16.7	0.1
Swee Hong	0.7	16.7	0.1

Losers

BY CENTS

	CLOSE	DOWN	%
China Intl	22	-18.0	-45.0
Shangri-La HKD	1008	-10.7	-5.8
Global Testing	65	-5.0	-7.1
Bonvests	125	-4.0	-3.1
Civmec	40	-4.0	-9.1
Delong	599	-4.0	-0.7
Ho Bee Land	250	-4.0	-1.6
Tritech	3.6	-4.0	-52.6
Katrina	16.8	-3.1	-15.6
Sino Grandness	7.2	-3.1	-30.1

BY PERCENTAGE

	CLOSE	%	DOWN
Tritech	3.6	-52.6	-4.0
China Intl	22	-45.0	-18.0
Blumont	0.2	-33.3	-0.1
JCG Investment	0.2	-33.3	-0.1
Sino Grandness	7.2	-30.1	-3.1
BH Global	7.5	-24.2	-2.4
Singapore eDev	3	-21.1	-0.8
BMM	0.8	-20.0	-0.2
Jasper Inv	0.4	-20.0	-0.1
Nico Steel	0.4	-20.0	-0.1

Most active

	VOLUME
Genting Sing	54,542,600
Rex Intl	29,256,200
RHT HealthTrust	25,003,700
JCG Investment	23,810,100
ThaiBev	20,066,400
Ezion	17,841,100
Mapletree Log Tr	17,078,600
YZJ Shipbldg SGD	16,507,300
Golden Agri-Res	15,278,000
Spackman	14,682,400
Market volume	1,446,231,000

	VALUE ($)
DBS Grp	67,071,824
Genting Sing	58,082,088
UOB	55,186,822
OCBC Bank	45,653,262
Singtel	41,868,545
CapitaLand	35,471,829
CapitaMall Trust	32,812,317
JSH USD	31,594,640
Ascendas Reit	28,393,547
JMH USD	26,222,018
Market value	945,271,000

Bonds

Company	Last Sale	+or-	Vol ('000)
CapMallTrb3.08%21022	102.5	-	-
CityDev NCCPS	108	-	-
DBS Bk 4.7% NCPS	10495	-	-
FPTrea 3.65%n220522	100.9	-0.1	49
Hyflux 6% CPS	6537	susp	-
UE Pref	190	-	-



The retail tenant sales per square foot at The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands jumped 19.4 per cent from the preceding year. ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

MBS' Q4 profits slide on weaker VIP play

Earnings down 20.8% from the same period a year ago as rolling chip volume tumbles 13.9%

A slump in VIP play at Marina Bay Sands (MBS) has dragged fourth-quarter Ebitda (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation) down 20.8 per cent to US$362 million (S$493 million) from the same period a year ago.

The casino's rolling chip volume, which typically refers to VIP play, tumbled 13.9 per cent from the same period a year earlier to US$6.8 billion in the three months ended Dec 31.

Total casino revenue slipped 17.6 per cent to US$500 million as a 0.9 per cent or US$4.68 million increase in the mass win-per-day for non-rolling tables and slots failed to make up for the drop in VIP visitors.

The slower casino business offset growth in MBS' hotel and non-gaming businesses.

Net revenue fell 11.6 per cent to US$726 million, though mall revenue rose 8.5 per cent to US$51 million, and revenue for convention, retail and others rose 8.3 per cent to US$26 million. Room revenue also gained 4.4 per cent to US$94 million, while food and beverage sales gained 3.8 per cent to US$55 million.

Separately, retail tenant sales per square foot at The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands jumped 19.4 per cent to US$1,898 from the preceding year.

Hotel occupancy was 95.5 per cent in the fourth quarter, up from 94.2 per cent in the same period last year. The average daily rate was US$423, up 1.4 per cent, while revenue per available room rose 2.8 per cent to US$404.

MBS' parent Las Vegas Sands saw fourth-quarter Ebitda fall 4.7 per cent to US$1.34 billion.

Net loss attributable to the group for the period was US$170 million, compared with net income of US$1.21 billion a year ago.

This translates to a loss per share of US$0.22, versus earnings per share of US$1.53 in the prior-year quarter. The decrease was mainly attributable to non-recurring, non-cash income tax items due to the implementation of US tax reforms, the company said.

Commenting on the group's overall performance for the quarter, chairman and chief executive Sheldon Adelson said: "The decrease in operating income was due to depreciation acceleration and asset impairments associated with our development projects in Macau. We also had softer rolling chip volume in Singapore, partially offset by stronger operating performance in Macau due to a 10 per cent increase in revenues."

As a group, net revenue for the quarter rose 2.5 per cent to US$3.48 billion.

For the three months ended Dec 31, the company paid a recurring quarterly dividend of US$0.75 per common share and increased its return of capital through share repurchases of US$430 million.

The group also increased its annual dividend for the 2019 calendar year to US$3.08, or US$0.77 per share per quarter.

CompanyBriefs

ST Telemedia

Temasek-owned ST Telemedia (STT) has acquired a majority stake in Singapore-based cloud computing firm Cloud Comrade.

STT is an investor specialising in communications, media and technology businesses.

The latest injection of funds into Cloud Comrade is set to bring complementary capability and market reach to STT's existing portfolio and enhance STT's multi-cloud, managed service capabilities in Asia, the companies said in a joint statement yesterday.

With STT as an investor, Cloud Comrade can leverage STT's expertise, resources, international network and growing portfolio of infrastructure software solutions to pursue market opportunities, accelerate customer expansion and enhance customer offerings, the companies added.

Established in 2014, Cloud Comrade offers a range of cloud information technology (IT) services from strategy and design, to deployment or migration and management of customers' IT infrastructure including 24/7 monitoring, maintenance, backup and recovery. It also has a presence in Indonesia and Malaysia.

The Trendlines Group

Catalist-listed incubator The Trendlines Group set up four more medical technology start-ups in Singapore last year, including tie-ups with the National Healthcare Group and A*ccelerate, the commercialisation arm of the Agency for Science, Technology and Research.

The Israel-based investor, which focuses on early-stage medical and agricultural technologies, now has six start-ups here through its wholly owned Trendlines Medical Singapore subsidiary, it said yesterday.

Mr Eric Loh, chief executive of Trendlines Medical Singapore, said in a statement that a partnership among entrepreneurs, clinicians, researchers, business mentors and other stakeholders will "create greater dynamics to realise the full potential of a technologically focused company".

The new start-ups include Medulla Pro Technology, which is developing an imaging system for lumbar puncture procedures, and Ayzer Sense Technology, which is tackling the problem of pressure ulcers in patients with technology from Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

Trendlines Medical Singapore is accredited as a Startup SG Accelerator by government agency Enterprise Singapore.

Keppel posts $135m in earnings in 4th quarter

Keppel Corporation turned in a better performance in the fourth quarter, compared to late 2017 when it had to pay massive fines over its corruption scandal.

It posted earnings of $135 million in the three months to Dec 31, a stark reversal from the $492 million loss recorded in the same period a year earlier when it took a hit of $619 million in one-off financial penalties its rig-building unit agreed to pay to resolve bribery charges in Brazil.

If that hefty fine was excluded from the 2017 result, Keppel's net profit for the 2018 quarter would have been 6 per cent higher with the property division contributing the most to group earnings, followed by the infrastructure unit.

However, the group's operating profit for the quarter decreased by 97 per cent to $5 million compared to the fourth quarter in 2017, despite the higher revenue. This was due mainly to lower fair value gains on investment properties in the real estate division, higher provisions for expected losses on rigs for Sete Brasil contracts and provision for impairment of an associated company in the investments unit.

AT A GLANCE

FY 2018 REVENUE: $5.96 billion (+30%)

NET PROFIT: $944 million (+382%)

FINAL DIVIDEND PER SHARE: 15 cents

Earnings per share was 7.4 cents, compared with losses per share of 27.1 cents in the fourth quarter of 2017.

Group revenue was $1.67 billion, 9 per cent higher than a year earlier. All divisions, except property, lifted turnover in the quarter.

Net profit for the full year came in at $944 million, up 382 per cent, on revenue of $5.96 billion, a rise of 30 per cent compared to the previous year.

Chief executive Loh Chin Hua told a briefing that while there was growing optimism in the offshore and marine sector and signs of improvement in the offshore rig area, a V-shaped recovery was not envisaged.

Keppel has proposed a final dividend of 15 cents per share. Including the interim cash dividend of 10 cents a share and special cash dividend of five cents a share paid last August, the total distribution for the full year will be 30 cents a share, compared with 22 cents a share for 2017.

Keppel Corp shares closed up 0.33 per cent at $6.13 yesterday.





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Interbank currency rates

Jan 24

Currencies	Against S$ Bid	Against S$ Offer	Against US$ Bid	Against US$ Offer
S$/US$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9651	0.9654	0.7096	0.7097
Canadian dollar	1.0180	1.0185	0.7487	0.7484
Euro	1.5466	1.5469	1.1371	1.1372
NZ dollar	0.9209	0.9216	0.6771	0.6775
Sterling pound	1.7732	1.7741	1.3037	1.3042
US dollar	1.3601	1.3603	-	-
S$/US$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	20.0153	20.0241	14.7161	14.7204
Danish kroner	20.7124	20.7186	15.2286	15.2309
Hong Kong dollar	17.33	17.34	12.7449	12.7452
Indian Rupee	1.91	1.91	1.4029	1.4031
Indonesia rupiah	0.0096	0.0096	0.0071	0.0071
Japanese yen	1.2398	1.2404	0.9116	0.9118
Korean won	0.1203	0.1205	0.0884	0.0886
Malaysian ringgit	32.81	32.86	24.1255	24.1546
New Taiwan dollar	4.4010	4.4031	3.2358	3.2369
Norwegian krone	15.8594	15.8710	11.6604	11.6673
Philippine peso	2.5720	2.5734	1.8911	1.8918
Saudi riyal	36.2626	36.2718	26.6617	26.6645
Swedish krona	15.0754	15.0826	11.0840	11.0877
Swiss franc	136.7072	136.7823	100.5126	100.5530
Thai Baht	4.2824	4.2858	3.1486	3.1506

Source: OCBC

Government securities

GOVERNMENT BONDS — Jan 24

Period	Issue code	Coupon rate (%)	Maturity	Close Bid	Day's High	Day's Low
2-Year	NY05100N	3.250%	01-Sep-20	101.92	101.90	101.90
5-Year	NX13100H	2.750%	01-Jul-23	102.88	102.92	102.85
10-Year	NX18100A	2.625%	01-May-28	103.51	0.00	0.00
15-Year	NZ13100V	3.375%	01-Sep-33	110.95	111.10	111.10
20-Year	NZ16100X	2.250%	01-Aug-36	96.03	96.12	96.12
30-Year	NA16100H	2.750%	01-Mar-46	101.82	102.00	101.60

Note: Based on latest issue

Source: Monetary Authority of Singapore

MSCI INDICES

Jan 23	Index	In local curr % dy Change	In local curr % yr Change
World Preliminary	1508.4	-0.3	4.6
EAFE Preliminary	1048.1	-0.3	4.0
Europe Preliminary	1462.0	-0.2	4.1
Australia	1174.3	-0.3	2.9
Austria Preliminary	528.5	-0.4	6.1
Belgium Preliminary	981.7	0.4	7.3
Canada Preliminary	1947.8	-0.3	6.4
Denmark Preliminary	7735.9	-0.5	4.4
Finland Preliminary	706.0	-0.1	8.1
France Preliminary	1757.0	-0.2	2.5
Germany Preliminary	890.0	0.1	5.5
Greece Preliminary	46.2	0.1	6.5
India	1261.8	-0.6	-0.1
Indonesia	7408.3	-1.0	4.7
Ireland Preliminary	189.9	-0.5	6.0
Israel Preliminary	248.9	1.2	7.9
Italy Preliminary	658.5	-0.2	5.8
Japan	927.6	-0.6	3.8
Korea	632.6	0.2	4.7
Malaysia	584.5	-0.8	0.5
Netherlands Preliminary	1520.4	0.6	4.3
New Zealand	138.8	0.0	4.6
Norway Preliminary	2916.7	-0.5	4.7
Pakistan	404.0	1.0	13.2
Philippines	1359.6	-0.2	7.7
Portugal Preliminary	83.9	-0.1	3.8
Singapore	1649.9	-0.7	3.5
Singapore Free	354.8	-0.7	3.5

Source: MSCI

OBITUARIES

FOR BOOKINGS AND ENQUIRIES
1800-289-9988 or 6319-5192

Athma Shanthi Pooja
The Family of the Late



Veerapan Yadaver Govindamal (Kannu)

Departed on 12 January 2019

Wish to express their heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all relatives and friends for their kind support during their recent bereavement.

Sons:
Veerapan Viswananthan
Veerapan Balakrishnan (Krishnaraj)
Veerapan Asogasivan

Daughters:
Veerapan Muthuletchumi
Veerapan Paravathi
Veerapan Radahmani
Veerapan Sarojini

Sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, grandchildren-in-law, great-grandchildren

Karumathi Prayers will be held on the night of Friday 25 January 2019 at Block 44 Telok Blangah Drive, #09-17, Singapore 100044

Athma Shanthi Prayers will be held on Saturday 26 January 2019 at 7.30pm at Sri Sivan Temple, 24 Geylang East Avenue 2, Singapore 389752

Please treat this as a personal invitation.
Tel: 6270 7628

In Loving Memory of our Parents



Mr & Mrs S. A. DURAI



25.01.2014



06.10.1980

With Deepest Sympathy & Heartfelt Condolences to
The Family of The Late



JOHN SEAH SENG NGUAN

Departed on 24 January 2019

from

The Management & Staff of

AGA ARCHITECTS PTE LTD

"Our true home is in heaven, and Jesus Christ whose return we long for will come from heaven to save us." Philippians 3:20



John Seah Seng Nguan
Age: 67
was called home to be with the Lord on 24 January 2019, dearly missed by loved ones.

Wife:
Ann Chye Kim Joon
Daughter:
Cathy Seah Min Hui
Siblings, nephews, nieces, relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Church of St Stephen (Prayer Room 2), 30 Sallim Rd, S'pore 387639. Nightly services will be held at 8pm. Funeral mass on 26 Jan 2019 (Sat) at 11am and thereafter for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 1pm.



OM SHANTHI
The family of the late



Veerapan Govindamal (Kannu)

Departed 12th January 2019

Wishes to express their heartfelt thanks & appreciation to all Relatives & Friends For their kind Attendance, Assistance, Condolences, Wreaths & Support during their recent bereavement.

We also take this opportunity to inform that:

1) **KARUMATHI PRAYERS will be HELD on 25th January 2019, Friday night at Blk 44 Telok Blangah Drive #09-17 Singapore 100044, Tel. 62707628**
2) **ATHMA SHANTI POOJA will be held on 26th January 2019, Saturday at Sri Sivan Temple Geylang East at 7.30pm.**

All Relatives & Friends are kindly requested to treat this as a personal invitation & Grace this occassion.

In Everloving Memory Of



Wee Sung Kit
Departed: 30th May 1974



Low Sam Moey
Departed: 25th January 1998

Gone from our lives one so dear,
But in our hearts forever near.

Dearly missed and always remembered by:
SON, Daughter-in-law, Daughters, Son-in-law, Grandsons, Grand-daughter and all loved ones

---

Athma Shanti Pooja
The family of the late



VIJAYA DEVI W/O LATE K. GOPALAN

Departed on 11 Jan 2019

wish to express their heartfelt thanks and appreciation to relatives, friends & colleagues for their kind assistance, attendance, condolences, donations & wreaths during their recent bereavement.

Athma Shanti Pooja will be held on 26 Jan 2019 (Sat) at 7.15pm, Sri Sivan Temple, 24 Geylang East Ave 2, S(389752). Tel: 9780 6659. *Please treat this as a personal invitation.*

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want ... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23



Keith Lim Kwan Ming

Age: 48
Was called home to be with the Lord on 23 January 2019. Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Elaine See
Daughter: Kayla Ann Lim

Father: Lim Tian Soo
Mother: Irene Chan Swee Choo
Sister: Tiffany Lim
Father-in-law: Lenny See
Mother-in-law: Irene See
Brother-in-law: Roy See
Sister-in-law: Joann Gor

Relatives & Friends.

Wake at Singapore Casket Level 4, Crystal Hall, 131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737.

Cortege will leave Singapore Casket at 12noon on Monday 28 January 2019 for Mass Service at Church of the Holy Family, 6 Chapel Road, Singapore 429509 at 1pm and thence to Mandai Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 3pm. Wake visiting hours: 10.30am-10.30pm.

In Loving Memory Of Our Dearest Parents



S.MURUGESU • M.RAJAMANIE
Departed 25/1/96 Departed 17/2/88

Dear Appa & Amma, we love you & miss you both.
Always remembered by children, grandchildren, relatives & loved ones

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SPORT

VAR

VIDEO REFEREE PENALTY GIVES JAPAN WIN ON VAR'S ASIAN CUP DEBUT **C9**

UNITED A BIG DANGER: EMERY

Arsenal boss believes Red Devils' new attacking play is a big test as Solskjaer relishes a fierce rivalry

LONDON • Arsenal manager Unai Emery has praised the work of Ole Gunnar Solskjaer in his short time at Manchester United, admitting the Red Devils are now a "very dangerous" opponent for any team.

Since taking over from Jose Mourinho, Solskjaer has overseen seven successive wins in all competitions, and his attacking approach has won over a dressing room that grew tired of his sacked predecessor's spiky personality and dour tactics.

The Gunners will host United in the fourth round of the FA Cup today and Emery is expecting "a very big test" after being impressed by their turnaround.

He told reporters: "It's a different team. It's the same players but they're playing with a big performance now. I watched their last matches and each player has a lot of confidence."

"We need to treat these injuries like a normality in football, but we are very sad."

Asked if it was important to find a swift replacement for Mislintat, he said: "Maybe if you do this recruitment very quickly, you can make a mistake. It's better to do without that, being calm and also finding the best possible person to do this job like we want."

However, he gave a glowing endorsement of Monchi, the Roma director of football who has been linked to the vacant post.

The pair worked together at Spanish club Sevilla and Emery hinted he was eager to renew the "good relationship" with his fellow Spaniard who was "a good person and a good professional".

But he knows better than to let these matters distract him against a man eager to get one over United's "closest rivals" in his playing days.

Solskjaer, reminiscing about the period when Arsenal were United's main competitors from 1997-2005, said: "That's the one fierce rivalry of my years. They won the double, we won the treble. The games were just fantastic."

Although United will rotate their side for the Cup game, the players that are standing in still "have the quality to play". He added: "We have a very good and talented squad. There will be one or two changes definitely."

One player who is eager to play is Alexis Sanchez, who is returning to London for the first time since his bitter exit last January. The Chile forward is expected to get a frosty reception but Solskjaer is unperturbed by the likely boos.

Said the Norwegian: "I think he'll love it if the crowd turn against him. As a player, pride kicks in and you think, 'I'll show all of you.'

"He's been fantastic in training, his attitude has been spot on so, hopefully, he'll enjoy the game."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

BIG TRANSFORMATION

It's a different team. It's the same players but they're playing with a big performance now. I watched their last matches and each player has a lot of confidence.

UNAI EMERY, Arsenal manager, on how Manchester United have changed under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

BIG CLASH

That's the one fierce rivalry of my years. They won the double, we won the treble. The games were just fantastic.

OLE GUNNAR SOLSKJAER, Manchester United interim manager, reminiscing about the tough Arsenal games he experienced as a player.

One year on, Sanchez returns as a faded star

Richard Jolly

It was the inauspicious anniversary. Tuesday marked a year to the day since Alexis Sanchez swopped Arsenal for Manchester United and when his current club, desperately trying to be ubiquitous on social media, tweeted about it, the Gunners deluged them with mocking replies.

As Sanchez makes his first return to the Emirates Stadium, with Ole Gunnar Solskjaer hinting a man displaced from the Premier League side will be granted just his second start for him, it is a move that benefited no one – except, perhaps, Manchester City who sense missing out on the Chilean amounted to a lucky escape.

Arsenal got Henrikh Mkhitaryan in exchange but, while the Armenian has delivered more than Sanchez, he has not touched the heights he did for Borussia Dortmund and is now injured.

In a bid to make a statement after losing one Galactico, Arsenal over-committed by giving Mesut Ozil a £350,000 (S$620,000)-a-week contract that Unai Emery must regret. If Jose Mourinho thought he was acquiring a talismanic figure in Sanchez, instead he signed a conundrum who proved a symbol of the manager's 2018, a year of miserable underachievement that culminated in the sack.

Then there is Sanchez himself. He is arguably Arsenal's finest player since Robin van Persie, but one of United's greatest disappointments. His Red Devils career has had few highlights, other than April's FA Cup semi-final and Manchester derby. It has produced just four goals; so few that Chris Smalling has scored as many in the same time.

Certainly Mourinho's tactics did not suit Sanchez. The Portuguese coach's orders to his wingers are to track back, which did not bring out the best from Marcus Rashford or Anthony Martial.

Sanchez may welcome Solskjaer's more forward-thinking attitude, partly because, with the full-backs overlapping, the wingers can cut infield, in a way he did in potent fashion for Arsenal.

Yet Solskjaer's side have shown an encouraging chemistry between the attackers.

After a year at Old Trafford, Sanchez has not struck up a profitable on-field relationship with anyone. Certainly, there were times when he and Paul Pogba seemed to want to occupy the same space.

If United look a band, Sanchez can seem a solo artist. Since moving north, he has tried to do it all on his own. He has attempted more dribbles, while losing the ball more frequently.

But the bigger concern goes beyond selection and style of play. It is that Sanchez, while only 30, has played 704 games in his career. He is burnt out; even after a rare free summer, he has not recaptured the sharpness that made him irrepressible for Arsenal.

He has looked a little brighter in cameos for Solskjaer's United, but they are based around pace and the pecking order has become clear. The supposed superstar is not in the strongest side.

stsports@sph.com.sg

ARSENAL V MAN UNITED
Singtel TV Ch111, tomorrow, 3.50am

Arsenal v Man United: Key battles



PHOTOS: REUTERS

STEPHAN LICHTSTEINER V ALEXIS SANCHEZ

Sanchez (above) scored 80 goals for Arsenal, including 30 in one season, but should brace himself for a tough reception from the fans who used to idolise him. This could be a battle of men looking to play a bigger part. With Hector Bellerin ruled out for the season, his understudy Lichtsteiner (top) has the chance to make the right-back spot his own.

AARON RAMSEY V ANDER HERRERA

Two FA Cup talismen. Ramsey has scored the winner in two finals for Arsenal while Herrera got United's semi-final decider against Tottenham last season. The Spaniard has been terrific for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer while the Welshman, although he will leave to join Juventus, was brilliant against Chelsea last week, hassling and harrying Jorginho.

ALEXANDRE LACAZETTE V ERIC BAILLY

United rejected a move from Arsenal for Bailly this week as the injury-hit Gunners looked to bolster their defence. Instead, the Ivorian's first appearance since his red card against Bournemouth on Dec 30 should come against his suitors. Lacazette's brilliant finish in Saturday's victory over Chelsea illustrated how dangerous the Frenchman can be.

Richard Jolly

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THAILAND COULD FACE GAMES BAN FOR DOPING

Anti-doping panel to decide its Tokyo 2020 weightlifting status after six positive tests

LONDON • Thailand's weightlifters face a ban from the Tokyo 2020 Games after six positive World Championships tests, with two from reigning Olympic champions.

The International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) caught them after carrying out extra tests on samples taken from "target athletes" at the Turkmenistan competition last November, when the South-east Asians finished second behind China in the medal tally.

More than half of the 600 athletes were tested but they came back negative.

The positives were uncovered after further analysis at the Cologne anti-doping laboratory in Germany by using "the most sophisticated available technique".

Any nation with three or more positives in a calendar year faces a ban of up to four years, and Thailand still has two further unresolved cases since December 2017.

Thailand is also the host of the 2019 World Championships but will have to withdraw if suspended.

The IWF said in a statement that it had suspended nine countries for repeated doping offences and it will not hesitate to do the same again.

The decision will rest with a new sanctioning panel comprising anti-doping experts and lawyers from the United States, Canada, Germany and New Zealand.

The first two of the Thai positives were announced on Dec 23.

They are Duanganksnorn Chaidee, the women's super-heavyweight bronze medallist, and Teerapat Chomchuen, the only men among the six.

The rest, named by the IWF on Wednesday, are Olympic gold medallists Sopita Tanasan (48kg) and Sukanya Srisurat (58kg), as well as Thunya Sukcharoen and Chitchanok Pulsabsakul.

Sukanya and Chitchanok were among seven Thai teen girls who were banned two years after being caught up in a 2011 doping scandal.

Earlier this month, the Thailand Amateur Weightlifting Federation (Tawa) celebrated its 60th anniversary with a visit to the IWF headquarters in Budapest where its president Boossaba Yodbangtoey spoke of the great strides made by the sport. Boossaba, also the general secretary of the Asian federation, was not available for comment.

Tawa said in a statement on social media that it was "greatly surprised and confused" by the new positives, and an internal inquiry had been launched. It added: "If it is found there are wrongdoers, they will be punished."

Weightlifting is effectively "on probation" at next year's Olympics owing to the doping problem, having been told its place on the Games schedule beyond then is under review. REUTERS



Japan's Ritsu Doan is fouled by Vietnam's Bui Tien Dung, resulting in a penalty being awarded after a VAR review. Doan converted the spot kick to send his team into the semi-finals. PHOTO: REUTERS

Asian Cup 2019

Japan's historic VAR penalty sinks Vietnam

QUARTER-FINAL

Vietnam 0
Japan 1

DUBAI • Ritsu Doan scored the Asian Cup's first penalty awarded through the video assistant referee (VAR) as Japan beat Vietnam 1-0 to reach the tournament's semi-finals yesterday.

VAR is being used for the first time at the Cup from the quarter-final stage. As the technology made an eventful debut, Maya Yoshida had a headed goal ruled out on review before Doan was adjudged to have been fouled in the box by Bui Tien Dung.

The midfielder rolled in the penalty on 57 minutes for a deserved win for the four-time champions. Japan were repeatedly denied by goalkeeper Dang Van Lam, who put on an inspired performance to keep the scoreline down.

Hajime Moriyasu's Samurai Blue will play their last-four match on Monday as they bid for a record-extending fifth title, and their first since 2011.

Dang saved brilliantly from Takehiro Tomiyasu's header and tipped Takumi Minamino's point-blank shot over the bar in an engrossing first half where VAR intervened after 24 minutes.

Referee Mohammed Abdulla Hassan blew for Yoshida's goal from a corner before replays showed it came off the defender's arm.

The Vietnamese No. 1 denied Wataru Endo early in the second half before VAR had another say, this time in Japan's favour when Doan went down under Bui's challenge and replays showed contact.

As Vietnam poured forward in search of the equaliser, Phong Hong Duy went close while Dang kept his side in the game with another fine stop, this time from Minamino.

But there was no coming back for the AFF Suzuki Cup champions, whose only other foray to the last 16 was in 2007, when they lost to eventual winners Iraq.

Favourites South Korea, who will line up with Son Heung-min leading their attack, will face Qatar today, while the United Arab Emirates play holders Australia.
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ASIAN CUP
S. Korea v Qatar
Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209, 9pm
UAE v Australia: 11.55pm

Search for missing plane called off

LONDON • Rescuers yesterday ended their search for the plane carrying Premier League footballer Emiliano Sala, which disappeared over the English Channel on Monday, saying there was little chance anyone on board had survived.

Sala, Cardiff City's new signing, and the pilot David Ibbotson have been missing since Monday night. Rescuers have scoured about 4,400 sq km but have found no trace of the aircraft or those on board.

Guernsey's harbour master David Barker said in a statement: "We reviewed all the information available to us, as well as knowing what emergency equipment was on board, and have taken the difficult decision to end the search.

"Next of kin have been informed of this development, and my thoughts go out to the family of the pilot and passenger at this most difficult of times."

After the plane disappeared, a recording emerged of a voice message Sala reportedly sent in which he expressed concern about the single-engine Piper Malibu aircraft he was in.

The Argentina-born forward, 28, was en route from Nantes in western France to join his Welsh team Cardiff.

Barker said the search involved 80 hours' flying time by three planes and five helicopters, with two lifeboats and other ships in the area also helping.

He said: "Although we are no longer actively searching, the incident remains open and we will be broadcasting to all vessels and aircraft in the area to keep a look out for any trace of the aircraft. This will continue indefinitely." REUTERS

Real top football's rich list, United down to third

LONDON • European champions Real Madrid displaced Manchester United as the world's highest-earning football club after the Premier League side's underperformance on the pitch in recent seasons ate into their dominance off it.

United slumped to third place, below both Real and Barcelona based on revenue for the 2017-18 season, financial services firm Deloitte said in its annual Football Money League yesterday.

The Red Devils have been the wealthiest club for two of the past three years and eight times in the last two decades.

Clubs in the Premier League – which has the highest broadcast revenue – took six of the top-10 spots, but LaLiga's two biggest teams prevailed thanks to their Champions League prowess and supremacy at home.

The changing of the guard in football's financial list mirrors the contrasting on-field fortunes of United and Real of late. Santiago Solari's men have won the Champions League for the last three seasons while, in the same period, United have failed to get past the last 16.

Their annual revenue was also hit by a slump in the British pound, growing only 1.5 per cent to £590 million (S$1 billion). Real, on the other hand, surged 11 per cent to €751 million (S$1.1 billion).

A spokesman for United said the club were "not too concerned" about financial league tables from year to year as the team remain a top global sports brand by any measure.

Part of their confidence lies in the fact that the Premier League still dominates the money pile.

There are a further five English top-flight teams in the top 10, including Liverpool, Chelsea and Arsenal, with even relegation-threatened Newcastle making the top-20 cut despite going trophyless since 1969.

Tottenham, who are waiting to move into a 62,000-capacity stadium, re-entered the top 10 for the first time since the 2006-07 term.

Italian Serie A champions Juventus, meanwhile, dropped out of the top 10 for the first time since the 2010-11 season despite signing former Real talisman Cristiano Ronaldo in the close season.

Weaker broadcast revenue in Italy relative to other big European leagues means Juventus have to do better than their rivals in the Champions League to bridge the gap.

Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain, who are backed by wealthy Middle East owners, are in fifth and sixth place.

Both are, however, facing claims they have breached the Financial Fair Play regulations, but City and PSG have denied any wrongdoing.
BLOOMBERG

DELOITTE FOOTBALL MONEY LEAGUE 2019

POSITION (PREVIOUS)	CLUB	2017-18 REVENUE (€M)	2016-17 REVENUE
1 (2)	Real Madrid	750.9	674.6
2 (3)	Barcelona	690.4	648.3
3 (1)	Man United	666	676.3
4 (4)	Bayern Munich	629.2	587.8
5 (5)	Man City	568.4	527.7
6 (7)	PSG	541.7	486.2
7 (9)	Liverpool	513.7	424.2
8 (8)	Chelsea	505.7	428
9 (6)	Arsenal	439.2	487.6
10 (11)	Tottenham	428.3	359.5

REUTERS

LOTTERY

TOTO

Thu, 24 Jan 2019 Draw No. 3443/2019

Group 1 Prize $1,177,344

Winning Numbers						Add. No.
03	04	18	32	41	44	34

Prize Group	Share Amount	No. of Winning Shares
Group 1	No Winner	0
Group 2	$123,932	2
Group 3	$2,470	69
Group 4	$405	230
Group 5	$50	4,506
Group 6	$25	6,358
Group 7	$10	89,920

Next Draw Mon, 28 Jan 2019, 6.30pm Draw No. 3444/2019

Group 1 Prize $2,400,000 est.

Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS

Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Fri, 25 Jan 2019				
A League	Brisbane Roar	Western Sydney	4.50pm	LW
Asian Cup	Korea Republic	Qatar	9.00pm	LW*
Sat, 26 Jan 2019				
Asian Cup	UAE	Australia	12.00am	LW*
German League	Hertha Berlin	Schalke 04	3.30am	LW*
English Cup	Bristol City	Bolton	3.45am	LW*
French League	Marseille	Lille	3.45am	LW*
English Cup	Arsenal	Manchester Utd	3.55am	LW*

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SportsWorld

Formula One keen on second race in China

SHANGHAI • Formula One is keen on establishing a second grand prix in China to go with the current Shanghai race.

While there are no immediate plans, another race in the country would help ramp up interest in the motor sport in China, said F1 head of global sponsorship Murray Barnett.

Shanghai has staged a grand prix since 2004 and in April, will be the venue for the 1,000th F1 race since the world championship series began in 1950.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

FA charges Hennessey over Nazi salute photo

LONDON • Crystal Palace goalkeeper Wayne Hennessey has been charged by the Football Association (FA) after making an alleged Nazi salute in a group photo with his teammates.

The Wales international was pictured with his right arm in the air in a photo posted on Instagram by Palace midfielder Max Meyer, who is from Germany.

The 32 year old has denied making such a salute, but the FA has taken a dim view, saying his gesture had "brought the game into disrepute". Hennessey has until Jan 31 to respond to the charge. REUTERS

Neymar doubtful for United clash

PARIS • Neymar is doubtful for next month's Champions League clash against Manchester United after Paris Saint-Germain confirmed the forward had injured a metatarsal in his right foot during their 2-0 French Cup win over Strasbourg on Wednesday.

The club yesterday said initial examinations revealed a "reactivation of the lesion of the fifth right metatarsal", adding that treatment would depend on how the injury heals in the next few days.

PSG face United at Old Trafford for the first leg of the Champions League last-16 clash on Feb 12.

Neymar responded to the diagnosis by posting on his Instagram page that he was seeking divine help.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Barca seal Frenkie de Jong summer deal

BARCELONA • Barcelona have won the race to sign Ajax Amsterdam's Frenkie de Jong after announcing on Wednesday that they had agreed a deal worth up to €86 million (S$133 million) to sign the Netherlands midfielder in the summer.

The 21-year-old will move to the Spanish champions in a transfer worth an initial €75 million with a further €11 million in add-ons, the Catalan side confirmed.

Club president Josep Maria Bartomeu hailed him as a "key piece". REUTERS

Australian Open 2019

FOCUS IS ON HER 'ONE GOAL'

Hard work in off-season pays off for Osaka, who aims to beat Kvitova to win 2nd Slam

MELBOURNE • For Naomi Osaka, Grand Slams are her "main goal" and such was her focus that she addressed the storm surrounding advertisements put out by her sponsor, Nissin Foods, only after her Australian Open semi-final.

The noodle company acknowledged "whitewashing" her in online advertisements, which depicted her as having pale skin and have since been pulled, before accepting they were "not sensitive enough".

Osaka certainly showed no signs her game had been thrown off by the controversy. If the 21-year-old, who later brushed it off as not "on purpose", had been annoyed by her anime portrayal, she took it out on Karolina Pliskova.

The big-serving Czech had been the bookmakers' favourite after her quarter-final win over Serena Williams, and led Osaka 2-1 in head-to-head meetings.

But her 10-match winning streak hit a wall as the Japanese hit winners at will from both her forehand and backhand, breaking the world No. 8's service game twice while not facing a single break point to canter through the first set.

The US Open champion had to endure a fightback in the second set, but converted her only break point opportunity in the decider, unlike the four wasted by her opponent, to triumph 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 yesterday.

After scorching the Rod Laver Arena with 56 winners, to Pliskova's 20, and 15 aces to burnish her reputation as one of the cleanest hitters of the ball in women's tennis, Osaka admitted later she was "kind of sad" over the closing of the roof due to the sweltering conditions.

She felt that, the extreme weather, which reached a reported 40 deg C, was ideal for her game and "it was my time to shine".

She said: "I expected (Pliskova's comeback) a little... I was expecting a really hard battle. I just told myself to regroup in the third set."

After becoming the first Japanese to reach the final two at Melbourne Park when she will face Petra Kvitova tomorrow, she told reporters that while it felt "a little bit unreal", it was the culmination of "the work that I put in during the off-season".

She added: "When you're little, you watch the Slams, the legendary matches here. There's only four of them a year, so of course I want to do the best that I can here."

She also acknowledged that while she had one eye on the world No. 1 spot, with the winner replacing Romanian Simona Halep, it was better she "focused on one goal" as "the ranking comes after that".

In her way of becoming the first Japanese to reach the sport's summit and just the 10th player to lift the New York-Melbourne double will be Kvitova, who is at the peak of her "second career".

While the two-time Wimbledon champion reached her third Slam final after a business-like 7-6 (7-2), 6-0 win over American Danielle Collins, it is her first since suffering career-threatening injuries after fighting off a knife-wielding burglar in December 2016.

Since returning to the WTA Tour after a five-month layoff, she has seven titles but success in the Majors remained elusive until now.

The world No. 6 said "it wasn't really easy to kind of deal with coming to the Slams and losing", so it felt "more sweet" after reaching her first hard-court Slam final.

The Czech, 28, revealed she had never lost faith, saying: "Not very many people believe I can do that again, to stand on the court and play tennis and kind of play on this level. (But) I really love playing finals. I love playing on the big stages." AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, NYTIMES, REUTERS

AUSTRALIAN OPEN
Day 12: Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, noon & 4pm



Japan's Naomi Osaka celebrating after defeating Karolina Pliskova 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 in their semi-final clash yesterday. The 21-year-old had 56 winners to the Czech's 20. PHOTO: REUTERS

SportingLife

Nadal in ferocious form leaves Tsitsipas in a daze



Rohit Brijnath

Assistant Sports Editor
In Melbourne

Defeat always hurts but it comes in a variety of sizes, shapes and styles. There is the close defeat and the no-chance rout. There is the last-minute loss and the unlucky day. There is the equipment malfunctioning night and the hand-eye genius who outwits you.

And then there is Rafael Nadal in one of his murderous moods.

This is defeat as destruction, when he could beat you with a blindfold on, hit forehands like a whip cracking, win more net points than the volleyer he is playing, and probably make you reconsider your tactics, your coach, your training and your profession.

Everyone who's played him carries a scar. In his old age even Roger Federer's going to wake up howling at the memory of Paris 2008 when Nadal eviscerated him 6-1, 6-3, 6-0. Someone should send that tape to Stefanos Tsitsipas for maybe he will feel better. After all he won six games last night – two more than Federer – in the Australian Open semi-finals as he lost 6-2, 6-4, 6-0.

Nadal is in his 25th Grand Slam final and Tsitsipas was in a daze. When the Spaniard is playing well he makes every part of his rival's game seem inefficient. Rod Laver Arena was supposed to be a court but turned out to be a maze. Where Nadal's shots were going, the Greek was never quite sure.

Nadal was sympathetic and yet, like all athletes, he is familiar with the cruelty of sport, the days when sport feels too difficult and defeat is too suffocating. "That's part of the game," he said. "Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. He's young. I lost enough times to know that. Everybody needs to go through that experience. Everybody needs to live this experience."

Tsitsipas came in later, held his head, left his sentences unfinished and could not adequately explain what Nadal had done to him. It was as if a Greek philosopher had been confused by a wandering gladiator.

"Honestly, I have no idea what I can take from that match. It's not that I was even close to get to something."

He paused.

"It's a very, very weird feeling. Almost felt like just couldn't play better."

He rubbed his head.

"(Rafa) has this, I don't know, talent that no other player has. I've never seen a player have this. He makes you play bad. I don't know. I would call that a talent."

He thought.

"His game style has something that it kind of makes the other half of your brain work more than it usually does, let's say. I don't know. I'm trying to understand, but I cannot find an explanation for that."

Nadal, injured only recently in Brisbane, has not a lost a set here and is now physically flying and mentally impenetrable. You could put him at a border, nothing would get past him. He doesn't care if you're old, young, bald, tall, he'll shake your hand and make you suffer. He'll salute your run through this Open and then take your wonderfully inflating balloon of hope and enthusiasm and puncture it in public.

He broke Tsitsipas six times, starting in the third game of the match with a searing backhand cross-court return and a forehand down the line that left a furrow. He earned 11 break points and in return gave the Greek just one lousy chance and that, too, when he was up 6-2, 6-4, 5-0. It's like a taunt and even that break point he saved.

Nadal whipped serves and lashed forehands when once he might have rallied. He hit 28 winners to the Greek's 17 and won 71 per cent of second serves to Tsitsipas' 30. There is a 12-year age divide between both men and it is the difference between promise and greatness.

On court, Nadal spoke politely and generously about the NextGen and used the word "improving" and by inference that means they are not quite ready. Indeed you can take Tsitsipas, Karen Khachanov, Frances Tiafoe, Alexander Zverev, Denis Shapovalov, average age 20.6, put them together against Nadal, age 32, and the head-to-head score is 15-1 in the Spaniard's favour.

Nadal – in his fifth Open final – has stayed relevant because his spirit is stubborn but his mind has turned flexible. Carlos Moya has replaced his uncle as coach and aggression has replaced his hesitation. Yesterday he stood close to the baseline and bullied the Greek till he retreated. The volleyer suddenly was too far from the net.

Nadal whipped serves and lashed forehands when once he might have rallied. He hit 28 winners to the Greek's 17 and won 71 per cent of second serves to Tsitsipas' 30. There is a 12-year age divide between both men and it is the difference between promise and greatness.

Tsitsipas has energised the Open, opened a door, charmed folks and has a style that brings D'Artagnan to mind. And yet in this absorbing tussle between generations, Nadal, always relentless, always ready, provided a significant lesson. For him, guards are not new, or old, but just never to be lowered.

rohitb@sph.com.sg

SINGAPORE HORSE RACING

FRIDAY, 25 JANUARY 2019
First race starts at 6.20pm

Live telecast and totalisator services are available for the above race meeting at the Singapore Racecourse and Off-Course premises.

For the latest updates, visit www.turfclub.com.sg or call the Singapore Turf Club at 6879 1000.

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SINGAPORE TURF CLUB

For admission to the Club on racedays, you must be at least 18 years of age.

SPORT

HIP-HOP GRANNY HITS UP CROSSFIT

Yeoh, 82, will also take part in a CrossFit charity event to raise funds for at-risk youths

Xener Gill

Grandmother of five Yeoh Kim Bee is not your average senior.

Since May last year, the 82-year-old retiree has been doing CrossFit once a week with 10 other seniors. It involves challenging exercises such as kettlebell swings and step-ups.

She also takes part in hip-hop dance classes and has been doing yoga for seven years.

"I've always liked exercising because it's good for my body," Yeoh told The Straits Times in Mandarin on Tuesday. "My whole family loves exercising. My son would always ask me to exercise and go swimming with him."

She added that her family enjoys cycling and swimming.

Yeoh, who lives alone, walks from her flat to the House of Joy, an elderly activities centre in Mountbatten, for her training. The class is designed to suit the elderly, with the intention of giving them the confidence to lead independent lives.

"I exercise not only for myself but also for my family. If I am healthy and fit, then my children won't have to worry about me," she said. "It's better if I can take care of myself."

The hour-long class begins with a light warm-up and stretching, followed by basic movements like squats. It moves on to technical movements such as burpees and a high-intensity workout to get the participants' heart rate up. It ends with a cool-down and stretching.

Innervate Fitness director and trainer Lionel Choong, 30, said: "This programme trains the seniors' physical capacity to encourage them to do things that they fear to do, like burpees.

"The more they do these movements, the more confident they will get, allowing them to lead more free and happy lives."

It was implemented last May with the intention of offering more interesting and exciting programmes for the elderly in the neighbourhood.

Choong has seen the seniors progress from learning how to do a basic squat to almost being able to do a full burpee. "A lot of them were scared at first but, their confidence and physical capacity have grown tremendously," he said.

House of Joy programmes executive Victor Wong, 34, said: "The goal is for the elderly to live out their golden years. They need good muscle mass and bone density to remain healthy but most seniors don't eat well and don't exercise."

TAKING CARE OF HERSELF

I exercise not only for myself but also for my family. If I am healthy and fit, then my children won't have to worry about me. It's better if I can take care of myself.

YEOH KIM BEE, 82, grandmother of five, who now does CrossFit once a week, on why she pursues an active lifestyle.

Yeoh has been active all her life.

When she was younger, she was in her school's sports club, where she did high jump and long jump.

She hopes to continue exercising for as long as possible.

After completing 22 CrossFit classes, she has adapted to the rigours of the programme and finds that she feels a lot stronger now.

"I would definitely encourage other seniors to take part in CrossFit because it keeps you fit and energised. You will also be able to make a lot of good friends through taking the classes together," she said.

Tomorrow, Yeoh will be among 500 other people participating in Operation Broken Wing, a CrossFit charity event.

The annual event, organised by Innervate Fitness, aims to raise funds for at-risk youths in Singapore. For every repetition a participant completes, their chosen sponsor will donate a fixed amount of money.

This year, the funds raised will go to the Singapore Children's Society.

Having never participated in a fitness-related charity event before, Yeoh is excited to do her part for the community.

"I will definitely do my best and complete as many repetitions as possible," said Yeoh, who will be joined by five other seniors from the House of Joy.

"These are people who need help but, they are helping others and to me, that's really fascinating," said Choong.

xenerg@sph.com.sg



Yeoh Kim Bee (far right) and 10 other seniors are part of the CrossFit programme at the House of Joy elderly activities centre in Mountbatten. The exercise classes aim to give the elderly the confidence to lead independent lives. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

SCAN TO WATCH Meet the CrossFit grandma: str.sg/crossfit

S'pore hockey women get their shot at Series Finals

Nicole Chia

The Singapore women's team will compete at the June 8-16 International Hockey Federation (FIH) Hockey Series Finals in Dublin after Austria's withdrawal.

The series gives developing hockey nations who are not in the Pro League the chance to qualify for events such as the Olympics.

A string of Open tournaments were held from June to December last year, where the two top from each leg made it to one of three Finals. The other two women's Finals are in Japan (June 15-23) and Spain (June 19-27). The men's Finals are hosted by Malaysia (April 23-May 1), India (June 6-16) and France (June 15-23).

The top two from each Finals will qualify for the FIH Olympic qualification event later this year.

In the Singapore leg last July, the Republic's women finished third and missed out on the Finals, but were first reserves. The men won and qualified to play in France.

Singapore Hockey Federation president Mathavan Devadas told The Straits Times yesterday that there are no targets yet, but hopes that both teams can improve their world ranking by at least five places. The women are 35th and the men are 40th.

"(The players are) doing some initial preparation and playing some friendly matches because they know the quality (of the opposition)... we don't have that level of competition in Singapore so, within the next couple of months, we'll know where we stand and set realistic targets," said Mathavan.

National women's coach David Viner noted that of the seven other teams in the Dublin pool, four are in the world's top 20 – No. 8 Ireland, South Korea (11), Scotland (18) and Czech Republic (19). The others are Malaysia (22), Ukraine (27) and France (32).

He added: "Many of the teams around the top 20 in the world and below... are operating full time or very close to full-time squads.

"Singapore are very much a team of hardworking students or employed professionals. But each player puts in a remarkable amount of time and commitment in order to represent their country in hockey."

cnicole@sph.com.sg

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

BASKETBALL

ABL Alab Pilipinas v Westports Malaysia Dragons (StarHub Ch202, 8pm).

FOOTBALL

Asian Cup Q-finals: South Korea v Qatar (9pm), UAE v Australia (11.55pm) – Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209.
English FA Cup 4th round: Arsenal v Man United (Singtel TV Ch111, tomorrow, 3.50am).

GOLF

European Tour Desert Classic: Day 2 (StarHub Ch204, 3.30pm).

TENNIS

Australian Open Day 12 (Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, noon & 4pm).

TOMORROW

BASKETBALL

ABL CLS Knights v Zhuhai Wolf Warriors (StarHub Ch202, 8pm).

FOOTBALL

English FA Cup 4th round: Man City v Burnley (10.55pm), Millwall v Everton (Sunday, 1.25am), Wimbledon v West Ham (Sunday, 3.40am) – Singtel TV Ch111.
Spanish LaLiga Sevilla v Levante (7.55pm), Atletico v Getafe (11.10pm), Leganes v Eibar (Sunday, 1.25am), Bilbao v Betis (Sunday, 3.40am) – StarHub Ch213.

GOLF

European Tour Desert Classic: Day 3 (StarHub Ch204, 4.30pm).

RUGBY

World Rugby Sevens Series Hamilton: Day 1 (StarHub Ch202, 8.30am).

TENNIS

Australian Open Day 13 (Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, 4pm & 6pm).

Live telecast times are subject tochange. For latest updates, go to singteltv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

Still a long way to be called a great: Harden

NEW YORK • After lighting up Madison Square Garden, one of the world's top sporting arenas, James Harden was talked up as one of the National Basketball Association's (NBA) all-time greats.

The six-time All-Star and reigning Most Valuable Player still receives hate from his naysayers on social media who say he racks up points by drawing weak foul calls.

61

Career-high points James Harden recorded against the Knicks, 20 behind Kobe Bryant's 81.

But on Wednesday, he singlehandedly took apart the New York Knicks and his critics with a career-high and club-record 61 points, all of which were unassisted.

After the Houston Rockets' 114-110 win, former teammate Jason Terry felt that the guard could catch Kobe Bryant's 81-point display against the Toronto Raptors on Jan 22, 2006 – the second-highest tally in the NBA after Wilt Chamberlain's 100-point game in 1962.

Harden did match the former Los Angeles Laker's scoring mark at the Knicks' home as he extended his streak of at least 30 points to 21 straight games – the fourth-longest in NBA history. Chamberlain had recorded three such streaks during his playing days.

Harden shot 17 of 38 from the floor but was just five of 20 from beyond the arc. He also had 15 rebounds and made 22 of 25 free throws.

But the league's leading scorer, who is averaging 36.3 points per game, declared he had no intention of letting up as "my legacy is at stake".

He told reporters: "Every time I come to the Garden, I got to put on a show. They (the fans) expect it and that is what I gave them. Basketball is something I love doing. There is no limit to what I can do."

Revealing he wanted to etch his name in the pantheon of NBA greats, the 29-year-old told the Houston Chronicle: "Kobe Bryant and Michael Jordan, now we're talking about the elites of the game, the greatest to ever touch a basketball.

"It's honourable to be up there with those names. Honestly, I have a long way to go. I'm not even close to what they accomplished in their careers. It's pretty cool to be in that conversation and almost there. But I have a lot of work to do.

"That's one of the reasons you play the game of basketball, to be, when it's all said and done, mentioned as one of the greats, the greatest that ever dribbled a ball.

"Obviously, you want to win championships and want the individual accomplishments, but every day when I'm in the gym and work on moves, I think about that.

"When I'm done (with the sport), I want my name up there with them. It's a good place to be in."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS, XINHUA

life

D

WATCH WONDERLAND
Key brands unveil showcase pieces at watch fair
D3



Change and growth take place when a person has risked himself and dares to become involved in experimenting with his own life.

– Herbert Otto

Live more, Bank less

New home for local labels

The permanent 25,000 sq ft set-up in Orchard Road features a retail showcase, incubation and co-working spaces, and a rooftop amphitheatre



Melissa Heng





Design Orchard (left), located at the junction of Orchard and Cairnhill roads, features a retail space (above) housing 61 home-grown labels.
ST PHOTOS: ONG WEE JIN

Three years after the closure of Keepers: Singapore Designer Collective, a multi-label pop-up retail store in Orchard Road showcasing home-grown brands, a new space for local design has sprouted up at its former location.

Announced in 2017, Design Orchard – a 2½-storey development at the junction of Orchard and Cairnhill roads – opens today.

While Keepers was meant to be a temporary space, Design Orchard – a joint project by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), JTC Corporation and Enterprise Singapore – is a permanent home for some of Singapore's emerging and established brands.

Keepers, which closed in January 2016, was a test bed for Design Orchard. Ms Ranita Sundra, STB's director of retail and dining, says the pop-up was initially supposed to run for six months,but was extended to 16 months because it did well.

"It helped us get a lot of data and the feedback we received showed us we really needed something more permanent," she added.

The 25,000 sq ft Design Orchard features a retail showcase, incubation and co-working spaces, and a rooftop amphitheatre.

The retail space spans 9,000 sq ft on the first floor and houses 61 labels across categories such as fashion apparel, beauty and wellness, food souvenirs and small home furnishings. Brands include familiar ones such as apparel label Matter and womenswear brand Yacht 21, as well as newer ones such as The Rocket Eyewear Company and resort-wear label Pinksalt.

The first-level space is operated by local retailer Naiise. Mr Dennis Tay, 34, Naiise founder and chief executive officer, tells The Straits Times that he hopes for Design Orchard to be the go-to spot for locals and tourists shopping for "uniquely Singapore" items.

"We want to see the brands perform and hope this will contribute to their growth and development as global brands," he says.

Will the retail space, with its multi-label concept, look similar to a Naiise store?

Mr Tay is adamant it will not and adds: "We made sure there wasn't any cannibalisation. Design Orchard focuses more on fashion while Naiise is more about lifestyle."

More than 65 per cent of the labels at Design Orchard are not available at Naiise, which started in 2013 as an online retailer and has brick-and-mortar stores at Katong I12, The Cathay and The Star Vista.

At Design Orchard, the brand founders and designers will also find opportunities for mentorship, collaboration and networking with industry players. An incubation space on the second level, run by the Textile and Fashion Federation Singapore, houses co-working areas, professional sewing equipment and a fabric library. The federation had previously worked with home-grown jewellery label Carrie K. for Keepers.

Naiise will run a mentorship programme covering areas such as marketing and merchandising. Mentors include well-known entrepreneurs such as Unlisted Collection founder Loh Lik Peng, Spa Esprit Group founder Cynthia Chua and Motherswork founder Sharon Wong.

Designers who showcase their brands at Design Orchard say they are eager to learn from their mentors as well as the other labels.

Ms Toni Chan, 37, founder of swimwear label August Society, says: "I'm looking forward to participating in the mentorship programme and connecting with other local brands because right now, everyone is kind of scattered all over the place. I hope to meet other designers and founders and maybe collaborate or see if we can hold events together."

For customers, Design Orchard is also where they can touch and feel the products.

Ms Alicia Tsi, 30, founder and designer of online womenswear label Esse, says: "Customers want to touch and see the pieces up close and try them on so they know how they fit. So having a long-term space is a good opportunity to grow the brand." The space at Design Orchard will be Esse's first physical store, though she has had occasional pop-ups.

Before Keepers and Design Orchard, there were other spaces that brought Singapore labels under one roof, though with much less success.

In the 1980s, Hemispheres at Delfi Orchard was the first boutique to carry local fashion labels. It closed in 1990 as international brands proved more attractive to Singapore shoppers.

In 2010, Japanese mall operator Parco opened a department store at Millenia Walk and set aside space for a fashion design incubator project called Parco Next Next. Local designers went through a structured training and mentorship programme and set up shop on the second floor of the department store. But sales were poor due to low footfall and Parco pulled out of Millenia Walk in 2014.

But retail experts are optimistic about Design Orchard.

Mr Samuel Tan, course manager in retail management at Temasek Polytechnic, says the strategic location indicates the importance of the initiative and raises the profile and prestige of the featured brands.

"The busy human traffic at that junction will naturally be drawn to the venue, giving exposure and visibility to the curated brands among local and overseas shoppers alike."

Dr Seshan Ramaswami, associate professor of marketing education at Singapore Management University, says the concept of a Singapore-centric shopping space is a distinctive one.

"It is a one-stop place where people can browse a wide assortment of locally designed merchandise. The home-grown aspect of the brands will help the development connect with the identity of local shoppers as Singaporeans. For tourists, they now have an easy way to shop for something truly Singaporean beyond ordinary souvenirs."

Another thing working for the brands at Design Orchard is that the government-run building will not be charging brands what it would typically cost to rent a space in Orchard Road. Instead, designers will pay a commission from their gross turnover as well as a small fee for the manpower cost.

But prime location and lower rental aside, the retail landscape is still challenging.

Adjunct Associate Professor Lynda Wee from the Nanyang Business School says the retail space must go beyond sales and engage customers.

"It has to go beyond the transactional and the brands cannot operate as silos sharing the same space where each focuses on its own profit or loss. There has to be synergy and storytelling."

Fashion expert Lionnel Lim, who has been in the industry for over 20 years, hopes Design Orchard will offer original designs with good quality and workmanship.

The senior society editor with Prestige magazine says: "Designers need to study their merchandise selection very carefully, create things that are not similar to what you can find everywhere.

"From what I have seen, the items look pretty generic. It will work if there is enough to entice local shoppers and tourists."

melheng@sph.com.sg

MORE STORIES on D2

> **It has to go beyond the transactional and the brands cannot operate as silos sharing the same space where each focuses on its own profit or loss. There has to be synergy and storytelling.**
>
> **ADJUNCT ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR LYNDA WEE** from the Nanyang Business School, who says Design Orchard must go beyond sales and engage customers

Give me good design at the right price

Going beyond selling made-in-Singapore goods, Design Orchard should strive to balance its product mix, showcasing both high-concept and lowbrow items



Sharon Lim

The last time I bought something from a Singapore designer was at the Keepers Red Letter Sale earlier this month. Held at the National Design Centre, more than 40 Singapore designers showcased their wares from fashion to furnishings.

There were also food and drinks, courtesy of local food and beverage businesses that set up shop at this buzzy annual bazaar.

I bought jewellery from Carrie K., whose designer Carolyn Kan started Keepers in 2011 as a quarterly event at her old atelier for emerging Singapore artisans and designers.

Keepers has since grown into a regular event and, since 2016, become a permanent retail space at the National Design Centre.

Notably, Keepers also had a 16-month stint in a pop-up space in Orchard Green – the home of Design Orchard.

Run by local retailer Naiise, Design Orchard is the latest in a long line of initiatives to support Singapore's design talent.

A little local fashion history: In the 1980s, Hemispheres in Delfi Orchard was the place to go to for names like Bobby Chng, David Wang and Sylvia Teh.

More recently, in the early 2010s, a group of emerging labels such as Revasseur and Mash-Up were each given a rent-free one-year tenure at Parco Next Next in Japanese department store Parco in Millenia Walk. That was a short-lived retail experiment that lasted about two years.

In property and retail, location is everything. Arguably, Parco Next Next failed because its location did not see enough footfall.

By the same token, Design Orchard, with its location at the busy crossroads of Cairnhill and Orchard roads, should not fail.

The stakes are high. Orchard Road is still in a retail slump, part of a bigger economic slowdown that has claimed a few casualties, such as American casual wear brands Gap and Banana Republic last year.

However, Singapore fashion itself is in the midst of a "local pride" moment. Brands such as In Good Company, Max Tan and Aijek are stocked at Tangs, while shoppers can also pop by the ateliers of womenswear label Ong Shunmugam and Marilyn Tan Jewellery.

And next week, local menswear brand Biro will open its first store at Mandarin Gallery, a stone's throw away from Design Orchard.

There are also regular shopping events such as the twice-yearly Boutiques Fair, featuring a mix of independent vendors based in Singapore.

Naturally, expectations are high for Design Orchard. Its stable of 61 new, emerging and established brands – across categories such as fashion apparel, beauty and wellness, food souvenirs and small home furnishings – looks promising.

But will people buy?

Tourists likely will. Naiise, with its proven success in offering cool Singapore kitsch, will ensure that.

Certainly, the small and growing group of consumers here who buy and support local design will also shop at Design Orchard, if the retail mix hits all the right notes.

But will the regular shopper care enough to want to visit Design Orchard as often as he or she shops at H&M across the road?

Therein lies the rub. While it is great that Design Orchard is a hub for Singapore design, consumers should be past buying Singapore design for its own sake.

I'm glad it's not called Design Singapore. Although that was likely to avoid confusion with DesignSingapore Council, the national agency tasked with "enabling Singapore to use design for economic growth and to make lives better", it has also set the tone for how designers here should be viewed.

Singapore designers are slowly, but surely, gaining competitive ground in this respect, resulting in our own version of uniquely Singapore cool.

The reality is, people buy good design at the right price, not just because it is "made in Singapore".

I think of the now-defunct Colette in Paris and 10 Corso Como in Milan, arbiters of cool design and style, as well as Dover Street Market, a multi-label retail concept created by Rei Kawakubo of Japanese fashion label Comme des Garcons and her husband Adrian Joffe.

These stores are destinations unto themselves and their retail offerings are unique and unexpected. For example, Colette released a limited-edition collection in 2014 to mark the 40th anniversary of Hello Kitty and the 60th anniversary of Playboy. Hello Kitty as a Playboy bunny? How could I resist? (For the record, I'm not a fan of either.)

The product mix will be key. I want to go to Design Orchard because it offers not only alternative or diverse expressions of local design, but also an array of high-concept and lowbrow, useful and "bo liao" (Hokkien for silly) items – it has to be more than just "cool stuff".

The incubator programme for the brands at Design Orchard will play nicely into this and carry on where Parco Next Next left off.

Mentorship initiatives covering areas such as marketing, merchandising and expansion will feature insights from established names like Unlisted Collection founder Loh Lik Peng and Spa Esprit Group founder Cynthia Chua. Because in any business, the bottom line counts.

Balancing the books is the backbone of any business, of course, but brand equity is ever more crucial in today's retail scene where consumers are fickle and online shopping is just a click away.

What will make you want to go back again and again to Design Orchard? Its website proclaims that it is "where local brands flourish". That is a promising start.

stlife@sph.com.sg

• Sharon Lim is a lecturer at the School of Fashion Studies in the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. She was formerly the editor-in-chief of Elle Singapore for 12 years and is a keen supporter of local design.

5 new Singapore labels to check out at Design Orchard

1

Esse

This eco-conscious womenswear brand founded by 30-year-old Alicia Tsi uses sustainable fabrics and works with factories that ensure ethical labour.

Half of the label's garments are made from renewable fibres which impact the environment less than conventional cotton and oil-based fabrics. The rest of the garments are made with rescued leftover fabrics.

The label has a minimalistic style with clean silhouettes in solid colours. A V-neck panelled jumpsuit costs $138 while a pair of organic cotton double layered pants costs $118 (right).





2

The Rocket Eyewear Company

Founded by brother-and-sister team Ong En Ming, 31, and Ong Ker Shing, 43, the sunglasses brand offers understated yet elegant eyewear.

Inspired by their mother, the designs are based on her favourite eyewear shape, which is a classic round frame. It was originally designed for American soldiers during World War II and made popular by old-school Hollywood stars such as Grace Kelly and James Dean.

The brand's lenses are polarised and offer 100 per cent UVA and UVB protection. Prices range from $149 to $169.



3

Re:erth

Though the skincare label launched only in 2017, it has already garnered awards from multiple beauty magazines.

Designed in Singapore and made in Japan, the brand was founded by Singaporeans Toh Ziling, Winnie Lim, Keith Cheong and Celestine Koh, and Tokyo-born Shinji Yamasaki. Their ages range from mid-20s to 33.

The brand's star ingredient is Japanese white turmeric, which claims to prevent the degradation of hyaluronic acid in the skin, while giving it a supple texture and greater clarity.

The label has seven products, including a cleanser ($70, above) and an eye cream ($99).



Tresse's Dinlida Meteorite wallet ($205) has a zipped coin compartment, nine card slots and three full-length flat pockets for dollar notes.

4

Tresse

This small leather goods brand, founded by Mr Altaf Parpia, combines traditional leather weaving techniques with classic modern silhouettes.

The woven exterior of the label's wallets is made using vegetable-tanned goat skins, which are cut into thin strips and woven using a loom.

The interior leather is made from hairsheep leather, which is known for being both strong and soft. A cardholder costs $85, while a bi-fold wallet costs $135.

5

Xoxojoy

Founded by mother-of-two Juliana Neo, 40,the label carries adorable matching outfits for parents and children.

A checkered flouncy dress for girls costs $49 while the same style in adult size costs $59.

There are outfits for women, men and children between the ages of three months and 12 years.

Melissa Heng



Home-grown label Xoxojoy has clothes for the whole family.

PHOTOS: ESSE, RE:ERTH, THE ROCKET EYEWEAR COMPANY, TRESSE, XOXOJOY

Minutes&Seconds



Montblanc ambassador Hugh Jackman and Montblanc Malaysia "friend of the brand" Lawrence Wong at the Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie. Jackman is wearing a Montblanc 1858 Geosphere, while Wong is sporting a Montblanc Star Legacy Full Calendar. PHOTOS: A. LANGE & SOHNE, CARTIER, IWC, MONTBLANC, ULYSSE NARDIN

Top picks for the wrist

The number and variety of timepieces unveiled at the Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie watch fair were staggering

Wong Kim Hoh
In Geneva

As it had done for the last 29 years, the Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie (SIHH) watch fair in Geneva wowed, stunned, delighted and disappointed watch lovers in equal measure last week.

The number and variety of timepieces unveiled by 35 key players in the horological world were staggering. Cartier alone unveiled 75 different references while Montblanc released 33.

Many were new models and others, updated iterations of classic and existing lines.

Some brands made a bigger din than others. The most controversial was Audemars Piguet's Code 11.59, its first new collection for both men and women in more than 25 years. The collection comprises 13 models with six in-house movements, three of which are new.

Boasting more classical looks, it is a radically different line from the Royal Oak, which makes up 85 per cent of the brand's total sales that hit more than 1.1 billion Swiss francs (S$1.5 billion) last year.

Reaction to the new collection, which took seven years to develop, was polarising. There were as many negative reviews as there were positive ones.

But the brand's head honcho Francois-Henry Bennahmias was not frazzled. Client orders, he said, have been more than encouraging.

He also pointed out that scepticism greeted the Royal Oak when it was first introduced in the 1970s. The Gerald Genta-designed timepiece has gone on to become one of the most iconic watches of all time.

Also generating much buzz at SIHH this year was Richard Mille, which surprised and delighted many with its unexpected Bonbon collection, a colourful and whimsical range of candy- and fruit-inspired timepieces.

Although the watches look playful, they boast serious technical and artisanal substance, including grand feu enamel dials, carbon cases and titanium baseplates.

Here are a few other head-turning new lines from the fair which should be on your watch radar this year.

kimhoh@sph.com.sg

Watch out for...



ULYSSE NARDIN FREAK X

Ulysse Nardin's Freak was groundbreaking when it was first launched in 2001. An unconventional carousel-type tourbillon which does not have a proper dial, crown or hands, it boasts escapement components fashioned from silicon.

Named Watch Of The Year, it spawned a couple of series: Freak Out and Freak Vision. A new line grabs the limelight this year: Freak X (above).

Conceived as an entry-level offering, it has a 43mm case and comes in three versions: titanium, rose gold and carbonium, a super lightweight material used in the aeronautical industry. Prices start at $32,300, markedly lower than Freak Vision, which costs nearly $150,000

It is powered by a slightly pared-down, self-winding new movement, the UN-230. Unlike other Freak models which uniquely uses the bezel to set the time, the Freak X comes with a winding crown.

All models come with alligator or calfskin leather straps and have a power reserve of 72 hours. The titanium model costs $32,300, the carbonium model $36,900 and the rose gold version, $46,200.



LANGE 1 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The highly decorated Lange 1 celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. To commemorate the occasion, A. Lange & Sohne is releasing a limited-edition model (above).

Like some past Lange 1 models, this white gold anniversary model boasts an argente dial with a recess, deep blue markings and date numerals as well as a blue alligator leather strap.

The hinged cuvette is engraved with the Lange headquarters, the inscription "25 Years Lange 1" as well as the names of the late Walter Lange and Gunter Blumlein. The two men were key figures in the brand's resurgence as watch-makers par excellence in the 1990s.

The case measures 38.5mm in diameter and the watch is powered by the second-generation Lange 1 movement, the L121.1.

Limited to 250 pieces, the Lange 1 25th Anniversary retails for €43,700 (S$67,600).



MONTBLANC 1858 COLLECTION

Montblanc's booth at the SIHH this year evoked the great outdoors with images of wild woods, snow-capped mountains and placid lakes.

And, no wonder, because one of the highlights of the brand's 2019 novelties is three new additions to its popular 1858 line: the 1858 Automatic Limited Edition, the 1858 Automatic Chronograph Limited Edition and the 1858 Geosphere Limited Edition (above).

Riffing on a current trend, they boast bronze cases, green dials and khaki Nato-style straps. The utilitarian automatic model also has a version with a black dial.

The most impressive of the lot is the Geosphere, sported by Montblanc ambassador, actor Hugh Jackman, at the fair.

It houses the MB 29.25 calibre and features two turning globes at 12 o'clock and six o'clock, representing the northern and southern hemispheres.

Water resistant to 100m, the watch has a 42mm case and a bi-directional bezel with a ceramic insert marked with the four compass points.

Prices range from $3,645 for the automatic to $9,400 for the Geosphere.



IWC SPITFIRE COLLECTION

Aviation is the name of the game for IWC this year and pilots' watches, in particular a new Spitfire collection, rule the roost.

And for good reason. The watch brand is the principal sponsor for Silver Spitfire: The Longest Flight, an expedition this year by two British pilots to circumnavigate the globe in a restored 1943 Spitfire, an iconic World War II plane.

The new Spitfire collection comprises seven references boasting new colour schemes (especially handsome is the combo of bronze case, olive green dial and calf leather strap), movements and case materials. The range runs the gamut from a basic automatic model to a perpetual calendar and a Timezoner Spitfire Edition "The Longest Flight" (above).

The Timezoner, limited to 250 pieces, is a head-turner in more ways than one. Turning the bezel allows you to jump instantly to any time zone in the world. It houses a new movement – the 82760 – which comes with IWC's unique Pellaton winding system, an automatic winding system developed by the brand's late technical director Albert Pellaton in the 1940s.

Prices range from $6,800 for the automatic to $43,200 for the perpetual calendar. The Timezoner Spitfire Edition costs $19,100.



CARTIER SANTOS COLLECTION

Last year, Cartier gave its iconic Santos a makeover. This year, it adds to the line with several attractive new references: an updated Santos-Dumont (in two-tone pink gold and stainless steel, and all-pink gold); the new Santos de Cartier Large Model Gradient Blue Dial; a couple of new skeletonised models, including the Cartier Santos Skeleton ADLC "Noctambule"; and a stunning Santos de Cartier Chronograph.

The six models of the Santos Chronograph come in three metal combinations: stainless steel with a black ADLC (amorphous diamond-like carbon) steel bezel (above), stainless steel with a yellow gold bezel and 18K pink gold.

Available only in extra-large size (43mm by 51.3mm by 12mm), the watch houses a modified 1904-CH MC calibre and features a start/stop pusher on the left side of the watch and a reset button integrated into the crown.

It also comes with the Quick-Switch system, which allows for easy changing of straps.

Prices start from $5,000 for a Santos-Dumont to $87,500 for the Santos Skeleton in full pink gold. The Santos Chronograph is priced between $12,400 and $34,300.

Wrist Taker

Who: Ong Kim Seng, 73, acclaimed watercolourist

Watch: Grand Seiko Automatic Hi-Beat 36000 GMT

How much I paid for it: More than $8,000 in 2017

Why I like it: I go to remote places like the Himalayan regions of China and places where Wi-Fi or electricity is not easily available. An automatic watch is hence more useful than a smartwatch in these places.

Just as I prefer taking photos with a conventional camera instead of a smartphone camera, I also prefer to tell the time with a conventional timepiece. Contraptions which have other features besides timekeeping are just not my cup of tea.

I've been wearing Seikos for more than 13 years. I like the weight, and how they look on my hand. If I don't wear a watch, I feel something is amiss.

This Grand Seiko is perhaps the most expensive model I've ever bought. I like its design which is not flashy and allows me to read the time easily.

It's been extremely accurate from the first day I wore it.

Wong Kim Hoh





PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ONG KIM SENG

GIGS

Gerhana Skacinta 20th Anniversary Tour Live In Singapore
Malaysian ska band Gerhana Skacinta, who have performed at festivals in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, will be singing their evergreen songs, Mimpi and This Is Ska.
WHERE: Esplanade Concert Hall, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/City Hall **WHEN:** Feb 7, 7.30pm
ADMISSION: $28 - $58
TEL:6348-5555
INFO: www.sistic.com.sg

Golden Prosperous Year Concert
Celebrate Chinese New Year with local getai singers Wang Lei, Hao Hao, Li Pei Fen, the Bao Bei Sisters, Zhong Jin Ling, Zheng Ying Ying, as well as veteran Malaysian singers Huang Xiao Feng and Zhuang Xue Zhong.
WHERE: Resorts World Theatre, Resorts World Sentosa, 8 Sentosa Gateway **MRT:** HarbourFront
WHEN: Feb 10, 1 & 4pm
ADMISSION: $38 - $88
TEL: 6348-5555
INFO: www.sistic.com.sg

For King & Country Burn The Ships World Tour
Grammy Award-winning For King & Country, comprising Australia-born and Nashville-raised brothers Joel and Luke Smallbone, will perform songs from their third studio album, Burn The Ships – including the title track and previous hits such as Fix My Eyes, Shoulders and Priceless.
WHERE: Gateway Theatre, 3615 Jalan Bukit Merah **MRT:** Redhill
WHEN: Feb 11, 7.30pm (meet-&-greet session: 6pm) **ADMISSION:** $28 - $88; meet-&-greet package: $50 - $110; for tickets & more information, go to www.apactix.com

An Enchanted Evening With Nanyang Songbird Yudi Yap
Take a trip down memory lane and relive the golden years with some of the best-loved songs of the Nanyang region with evergreen singer Yudi Yap. She will perform jazzy renditions of classics such as Rose Rose I Love You, Dayung Sampan, Tian Mi Mi, Liu Lian Piao Xiang and Aiyomama.
WHERE: Esplanade Annexe Studio, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/City Hall **WHEN:** Feb 21 & 22, 8pm
ADMISSION: $30
INFO: www.esplanade.com

Josh Groban Bridges Tour
American singer Josh Groban, who is behind the global hit, You Raise Me Up, will be joined on stage by a full orchestra and choir to deliver an unforgettable performance. Groban has sold more than 30 million albums worldwide, but has never performed in South-east Asia.
WHERE: The Star Theatre, 04-01 The Star Vista, 1 Vista Exchange Green **MRT:** Buona Vista **WHEN:** Feb 25, 8pm
ADMISSION: $108 - $328
TEL: 6348-5555
INFO: www.sistic.com.sg

CHARITY

Speaker Tan Chuan-Jin's Photo Exhibition
Speaker of Parliament Tan Chuan-Jin is raising funds for vulnerable communities here and abroad through his photography project, which showcases images of his travels over the years. Visitors can buy prints of the images in various forms, from postcards ($50 for 15 postcards in a folder) to a Special Photo Book Set and Premium Photo Book Set ($1,000 and $5,000 respectively) that are autographed by Mr Tan. Exclusive metal prints ($10,000 each) will be autographed and personally presented by Mr Tan during a high-tea session. Among the beneficiaries is The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund.
WHERE: Level 2 Concourse, Far East Plaza, 14 Scotts Road **MRT:** Orchard
WHEN: Feb 1 - 28, 11am - 7pm
ADMISSION: Free
INFO: www.spmf.org.sg

TALKS

Pig Tales For Chinese New Year
As the Year of the Pig approaches, learn about the symbolism of pigs in Asian and South-east Asian art and history. From the pig-headed house god of ancient Tibet to one of China's most beloved literary figures in the classic, Journey To The West, the pig holds a special position throughout the region. The speaker, Patricia Bjaaland Welch, pursued her love for Chinese history, art and religion in Boston University and became a university lecturer teaching the same subjects. She has also published five books.
WHERE: Function Hall, Level 5 The URA Centre, 45 Maxwell Road
MRT: Tanjong Pagar/Chinatown Place
MRT: Raffles Place **WHEN:** Mon, 11am
ADMISSION: Free
TEL: 6337-3685 **INFO:** www.fom.sg

GigsPicks

Eddino Abdul Hadi Music Correspondent recommends



#UMAMISOUNDS
Singapore record label Umami Records will stage the second instalment of its live music series, this time with three acts from its roster.
On the bill are electronica/R&B singer Theodora (above), who released her recent single, Talking Insane, new pop trio brb, and rapper Nicco Homaili, known for his blend of hip-hop and electronica.
WHERE: Decline, 37 Lorong 23 Geylang **MRT:** Aljunied
WHEN: Feb 1, 7pm **ADMISSION:** $25 from bit.ly/2RJwJgB, $28 at the door



SANGRIENTO BLOOD PACT ALBUM + COMIC LAUNCH
Home-grown symphonic metal band Sangriento, an alumni of the Noise Music Mentorship and Baybeats Budding Band programmes, made their name with their theatrical live performances and steampunk-inspired image.
The band will launch Blood Pact, an 11-track concept album with a storyline set in a post-apocalyptic wasteland. The album is accompanied by a graphic novel drawn by drummer Christal, comprising chapters based on the new songs.
WHERE: Aliwal Arts Centre, Multi-Purpose Hall, 28 Aliwal Street **MRT:** Bugis/Lavender/Nicoll Highway
WHEN: Tomorrow, 7pm **ADMISSION:** From $17, go to sangrientobloodpact.peatix.com



ART AFTER DARK X SINGAPORE ART WEEK
Art After Dark, part of Singapore Art Week, features not just exhibitions, talks and live art performances, but also music by electronic acts and singers.
Performing at the party are producer-DJ Intriguant, singer, songwriter and producer Vandetta (above), rapper and singer MAS1A and dub artist Metzdub.
WHERE: Gillman Barracks, 9 Lock Road **MRT:** Labrador Park
WHEN: Today, 7pm **ADMISSION:** Free

SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS WITH FAUX PAS
Alternative rock quartet Faux Pas, who came to prominence through their stints in the Noise Music Mentorship and Baybeats Budding Band programmes, will celebrate the release of their debut EP, Separate Conversations, with two live sets at the Esplanade Outdoor Theatre.
The band are known for their buoyant brand of indie rock. Their performances are part of the Esplanade's All Things New series of shows by rising home-grown acts taking place throughout this month.
WHERE: Esplanade Outdoor Theatre, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade
WHEN: Tomorrow, 8.15 and 9.30pm
ADMISSION: Free



PHOTOS: FAUX PAS/FACEBOOK, UMAMI RECORDS, SANGRIENTO, VANDETTA

1819 And Before: Singapore's Pasts
Since the first archaeological excavation 35 years ago, more than half a million artefacts have been recovered from the Temasek (14th to 16th centuries) and Singapore eras (from 1819). The artefacts prove that Singapore had a sophisticated multicultural society and complex economy before 1350. The seminar will address important questions, which include the provenance of artefacts, ancient ecology and the environment of Singapore as well as the reconstruction of artefacts.
WHERE: ISEAS Seminar Room 2, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace **MRT:** Kent Ridge
WHEN: Tue, 10 - 11.30am
ADMISSION: Free, e-mail nscevents@iseas.edu.sg to register
INFO: www.iseas.edu.sg

Presenting Design Ideas To Clients
Learn what clients expect from graphic designers, the three critical things to know before starting design work and how to structure one's presentation and deliver it with maximum effectiveness. The speaker, Mr Chris Minjoot, has 25 years of experience in branding, marketing and communications
WHERE: MAD School, 03-22 Riverside Point, 30 Merchant Road
MRT: Fort Canning/Clarke Quay
WHEN: Jan 31, 7 - 9pm
ADMISSION: Free, $6.04 for beer & pizza, register at tinyurl.com/yaag8qah

CLASSES

Old Clothes, New Life – Tapestry Weaving Workshop
Learn how to repurpose that old blouse or pair of pants, basic weaving techniques and how to make tassels and fringes. Participants can take home a weaving loom kit worth $59.
WHERE: Citizen Farm, 60 Jalan Penjara **MRT:** Queenstown
WHEN: Tomorrow, 2 - 5pm; Feb 9, 9.30am - 12.30pm
ADMISSION: $79 a person **INFO:** E-mail learn@ediblegardencity.com or go to citizenfarm.com.sg/shop

Pineapple Tarts Workshop
In this workshop by Chinatown Festivals, participants will learn to make one of the most popular Chinese New Year treats.
WHERE: Kreta Ayer Community Club, 28 Kreta Ayer Road **MRT:** Outram Park
WHEN: Sun, 10am - 1pm
ADMISSION: $5 (for up to five people); tickets on sale at Kreta Ayer CC (Tel: 6222-3597) & Kim Seng CC (Tel: 6272-3878)
INFO: tinyurl.com/pinetarts2019

ST English Masterclass (The Executive Edition Special: Creative Writing)
This course is conducted by Felix Cheong, who has published 13 books across various genres, from poetry to short stories. The recipient of the Young Artist award, who has worked in the media industry for more than 20 years, holds a master's degree in creative writing and teaches journalism at the University of Newcastle and Murdoch University. He will cover topics such as the basics of narrative writing, generating story ideas and creating characters; plots, twists and endings; as well as turning life experience into stories and the publishing process.
WHERE: SPH News Centre, 1000 Toa Payoh North **MRT:** Braddell
WHEN: Jan 30, Feb 21; 10am - 6pm (lunch provided)
ADMISSION: $499 a person, sign up at stskills.sg **TEL:** 6319-5076
INFO: E-mail stmasterclass@sph.com.sg

FESTIVALS

Splendour Of Spring At One Raffles Place
Meet the God of Fortune, have your fortune told, collect red packets, stand to win gift vouchers and watch a lion dance performance by the winners of last year's Ngee Ann City National Lion Dance Competition. Geomancer and numerologist Alec Chia will greet shoppers as the God of Fortune (noon to 2pm today and Jan 29 and 31) and talk about the zodiac signs (level 5, noon, same dates)
WHERE: One Raffles Place Shopping Mall, 1 Raffles Place **MRT:** Raffles Place
WHEN: Till Feb 4, various times; lion dance: Feb 12 (11.08am)
ADMISSION: Free
INFO: www.onerafflesplace.com.sg

SPORTS

Super Rugby – Sunwolves Vs Sharks
This year's Super Rugby season kicks off with Singapore's adopted home team, Hito-Communications Sunwolves, who will face off South Africa's Sharks at the National Stadium. Having won their first match here last year, the Sunwolves hope to take home the trophy again.
WHERE: National Stadium, Singapore Sports Hub, 1 Stadium Drive **MRT:** Stadium
WHEN: Feb 16, 6.55 - 8.15pm
ADMISSION: From $10, for tickets & more information, go to sportshub.com.sg/SuperRugby

FoodPicks

Eunice Quek
Food Correspondent
recommends



NIKKEI CUISINE AT NAMI

You do not have to fly to Peru to get a taste of Nikkei cuisine – a combination of Peruvian and Japanese fare. You can now sample it at Japanese restaurant and bar Nami.

Nikkei cuisine marries Japanese cooking techniques with Peruvian ingredients after Japanese migrants moved to Peru in the late 1800s.

Osaka Cocina Nikkei, which has nine restaurants in South America, is having a pop-up at Nami.

Its branch in Santiago, Chile, is ranked No. 47 on Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants list.

Highlights from the seven-course dinner tasting menu ($188++ a person) include its signature dish, Inka Nigiri Duo, where you get nigiri sushi-style tuna tataki topped with yellow chilli "tiger's milk" and crispy quinoa; and soya and pisco-braised pork jowl sushi.

A spin on chirashi is Chirashi Black Causa, where king crab tartare, tuna tartare, shrimp, avocado and ikura are placed on a bed of causa – Peruvian mashed potato – mixed with squid ink, instead of the usual Japanese rice.

I also enjoy Tako Anticucho (above right), charcoal-grilled octopus skewers topped with Nikkei chimichurri and limo – a hot, citrus-like chilli pepper popular in Peru.

The Suspiro Peru dessert completes the satisfying meal. I was not certain how the combination of soursop sorbet, lemongrass dulce de leche, matcha meringue, matcha powder and Amazonian chocolate crumbs would work, but I polished it off in quick time.

A selection of Peruvian-inspired cocktails ($24++ each) is also available to pair with the food.
WHERE: Nami Restaurant & Bar, Level 24 Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore, Tower Wing, 22 Orange Grove Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Till Jan 27, 6 to 10pm **TEL:** 6213-4398 **INFO:** E-mail dining.sls@shangri-la.com

PERANAKAN FEAST AT FOLKLORE

Have a Peranakan feast this Chinese New Year at chef Damian D'Silva's Folklore restaurant.

Order the "Do-It–Yourself" Popiah Set ($60++ for four people, dine-in; $321 nett, minimum order for 20 people, takeaway) for a fun reunion meal with the family.

The popiah filling includes slow-braised pork belly, bamboo shoots and turnip cooked in prawn and pork stock – along with crab meat, prawn, shredded egg and minced and fried garlic.

Instead of the usual yusheng, chef D'Silva offers Peranakan prawn salad ($20++ dine-in, $22 nett takeaway) with poached prawns on lettuce drizzled with a spicy chilli plum sauce and lime juice.

Do not miss the Peranakan mee siam (above right, $16++ dine-in, $18 nett takeaway), with a robust and thick gravy slow-cooked with fermented bean paste, dried shrimp and prawn broth. It is topped with prawns, hard- boiled egg and a drizzle of lime juice.



PHOTOS: FOLKLORE, MADAME FAN, OSAKA COCINA NIKKEI, TIM HO WAN

Save space for the chef's selection kueh platter ($14++ for two, dine-in; $15 nett takeaway) which features traditional kueh such as kueh kosui, kueh salat and ang ku kueh.
WHERE: Folklore, Level 2 Destination Singapore Beach Road, 700 Beach Road **MRT:** Nicoll Highway/Lavender **WHEN:** Feb 4 to 19, noon to 2.30pm, 6 to 9.30pm, book five days in advance **TEL:** 6679-2900 **INFO:** Go to www.facebook.com/folkloresg or e-mail reserve@folklore.sg

MADAME FAN'S FIRST CHINESE NEW YEAR

Stylish fine-dining Chinese restaurant Madame Fan debuts its Lunar New Year menus.

Set lunch menus are priced from $78++ a person (minimum two to dine), while dinner menus are from $128++ a person. An a la carte menu is also available.

Toss to a year of abundance with the Prosperity Yusheng (right, $88 or $128, dine-in only), which includes a refreshing mix of crispy rice noodles, purple cabbage, pomelo, mandarin orange and green mango.

The premium seven-course dinner menu ($238++ a person, minimum four to dine) includes bird's nest, crab meat and crab roe in supreme stock; South African abalone and tofu with seasonal vegetables; and charcoal-grilled wagyu with foie gras. End on a sweet note with a chocolate cremeux with mandarin orange dessert.



WHERE: Madame Fan, The NCO Club, 32 Beach Road **MRT:** Esplanade **WHEN:** Till Feb 19, noon to 3pm, 6 to 11pm; Feb 4, 6 to 8pm, 8.30 to 10.30pm, pre-payment required **TEL:** 6818-1921 **INFO:** Go to madamefan.sg or e-mail dining.reservations@theNCOclub.com

TIM HO WAN'S REVAMP

In line with its new and ninth outlet opening at Great World City, Tim Ho Wan has updated and revamped the menus in the other eight outlets.

Co-founding Hong Kong chef duo Mak Kwai Pui and Leung Fai Keung were in town recently for the launch and it is good to know they are adamant about raising the standards again.

New dishes include Hong Kong braised beef soup noodle ($8.80) with tender and flavourful beef in a light broth; pork dumplings in a hot and spicy sauce (below, $6); and spicy fried rice ($7.50). Fried rice is not something I would normally order, but this is cooked with egg, edamame and fragrant lup cheong.

The classics remain. The signature Baked BBQ Pork Buns ($5.80) retain a crisp crust and are filled with diced barbecued pork; and the barbecue pork rice rolls (chee cheong fun, $5.50), which have thinner sheets now, are made with a blend of four flours.
WHERE: Tim Ho Wan outlets including Great World City, Pacific Plaza and Westgate **MRT:** Various **INFO:** Go to www.timhowan.com for list of outlets and opening hours



FOOD

PROMOTIONS

New D9 Cakery Saturday High Tea Buffet
D9 Cakery of Hilton Singapore has enhanced its Saturday High Tea Buffet. Besides the popular 6m showcase of handcrafted artisanal cakes by executive pastry chef Cindy Khoo, the buffet line-up presents more than 30 choices of international and local delights, featuring six live stations of gourmet carvings, a seafood bar, Parmesan cheese wheel pasta and stone hearth oven cooked pizzas.
WHERE: Lobby Level Hilton Singapore, 581 Orchard Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Saturdays, noon to 3pm **PRICE:** $48++ an adult (add $35++ for free-flow wine & beer), $24++ a child (aged five to 12, free for those below five) **TEL:** 6730-3392 **INFO:** E-mail D9Cakery@hilton.com

The Fiorentina Experience At Monti
Monti, located at the iconic spherical Fullerton Pavilion, is offering the Fiorentina Experience, which features properly aged, world-class T-bone steaks. This includes the Mayura Full-Blood Wagyu T-Bone ($320++), Sanchoku F1 Wagyu T-Bone ($220++) and Rangers Valley Black Onyx T-Bone ($180++). The Mayura won the highest level of Australia's Delicious Produce Awards last year, with an impressive marbling score of 9+.
WHERE: Fullerton Pavilion, 82 Collyer Quay **MRT:** Raffles Place **WHEN:** Lunch (weekdays), noon - 3pm; brunch (weekends & public holidays), 9.30am - 5pm; dinner: 6 - 10.30pm daily **TEL:** 6535-0724 **INFO:** E-mail reservations@monti.sg

Fat Prince's New Brunch Menu
Fat Prince's new weekend brunch menu includes salads and starters such as Avocado & Kale Tabbouleh ($15), a Levantine vegetarian salad. Mains include Fatteh Prince Breakfast ($24), consisting of halloumi, falafel, tabbouleh, hummus, fried eggplant, poached eggs, yogurt and toasted pita; and Turkish Spiced Buckwheat Flapjack ($16). Menemen ($24) is a classic dish of Turkish scrambled eggs cooked with spiced tomato and labneh with a choice of hallmoumi, chicken or lamb, served with house bread. Sides of eggs, bread, avocado and fruit are available to pair with any order. Fat Prince's signature kebabs and desserts are also available during brunch.
WHERE: 48 Peck Seah Street **MRT:** Tanjong Pagar **WHEN:** Saturdays, 11.30am - 3pm **PRICE:** $15 - $24 **TEL:** 6221-7794 **INFO:** E-mail info@fatprincesg.com

CHINESE NEW YEAR

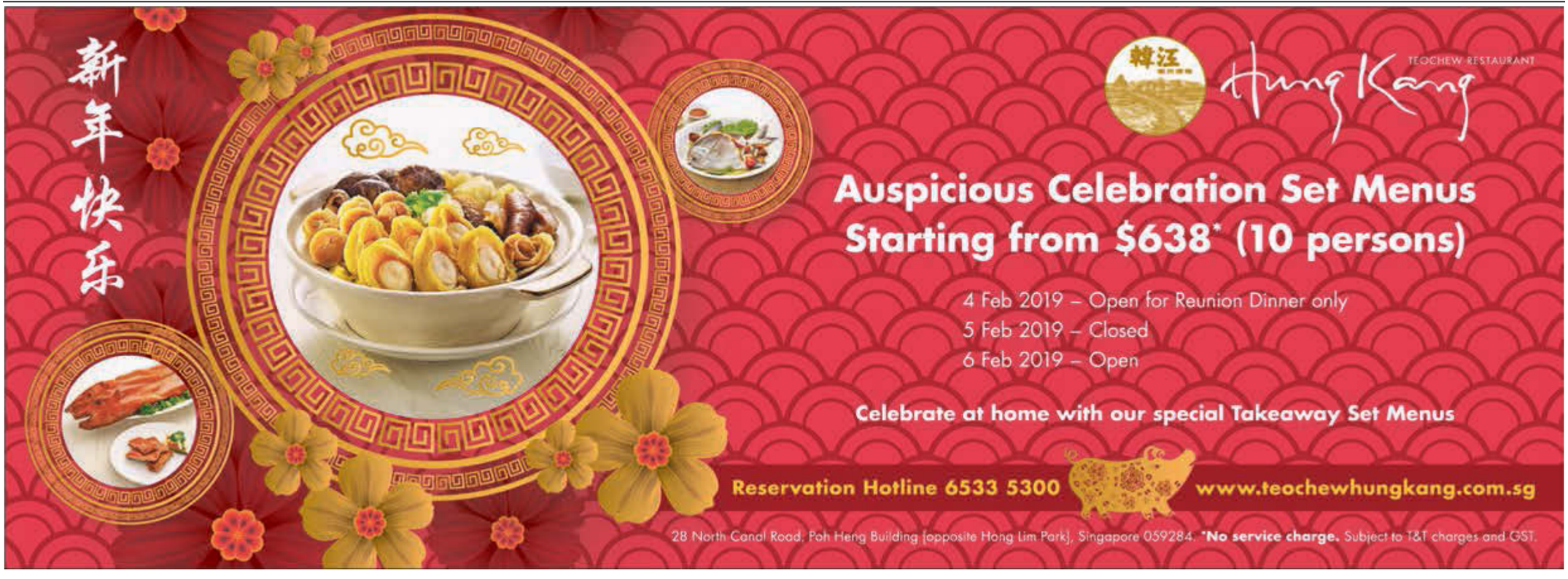
Hua Ting's Prosperity Set And Fortune Steamboat
The Prosperity sets at Orchard Hotel's Hua Ting Restaurant feature Cantonese favourites and signatures such as double-boiled chicken soup with South American sea cucumber and sea whelk; braised six-head South African whole abalone; wok-fried local lobster in white pepper; and superior bird's nest with salmon roe. At Hua Ting Steamboat, there are two Fortune sets, five special broths and ingredients such as garoupa, live prawns, scallops, Angus beef and housemade items such as fresh shrimp paste ball stuffed with minced pork and dried beancurd skin stuffed with fish skin.
WHERE: Level 2 Orchard Hotel Singapore, 442 Orchard Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Till Feb 19; reunion lunch 11.30am - 2.30pm (weekdays) & 11am - 2.30pm (weekends, eves of & public holidays), dinner 6 - 10pm: $108++ - $198++ a person, $988++ - $4,888++ (for 10 people); steamboat (11.30am - 2.30pm, 5.30 - 10.30pm): $78++ - $98++ a person **TEL:** 6739-6666 **INFO:** E-mail huating.ohs@millenniumhotels.com

Contemporary Asian CNY Dinner At Ce La Vi
Ce La Vi's contemporary Asian Chinese New Year Menu showcases auspicious dishes with a modern twist. Dishes include marinated tuna with Oscietra caviar, roasted chilli chicken veloute with mushroom dumplings, lychee wood smoked duck breast and sucking pig roulade. For dessert, mandarin orange cheesecake is served alongside vanilla ice cream.
WHERE: Level 57 Sands SkyPark, Marina Bay Sands Tower 3, 1 Bayfront Avenue **MRT:** Bayfront **WHEN/PRICE:** Mon - Feb 3 & Feb 7 - 10, $178++ a person; Feb 4 - 6, $198++; add $178++ for wine-pairing **TEL:** 6508-2188 **INFO:** E-mail reservation-sg@celavi.com

Jia Wei Customised Reunion Sets
Grand Mercure Singapore Roxy has introduced customised set menus for reunion dinner at Jia Wei Chinese Restaurant. Signature dishes include Steamed Dragon Spot Grouper with chef's housemade chilli plum sauce and Jia Wei Charcoal Grilled Suckling Pig. Diners can customise their own meal from an a la carte set menu of more than 20 dishes.
WHERE: Level 2 Grand Mercure Singapore Roxy, Roxy Square, 50 East Coast Road **MRT:** Eunos/Dakota **WHEN/PRICE:** Till Feb 4: $339++ (for four people) - $1,398++ (for 10); Feb 5 - 19: $349++ (for four) - $999++ (for 10); freebies range from mandarin orange tea to beer, wine & Gremillet Brut Champagne **TEL:** 6340 5678 **INFO:** E-mail H3610-FB7@accor.com

Pizza Maru's Golden Ingot And Golden Boat
South Korean pizza chain Pizza Maru has rolled out a Golden Ingot ($26.80) and Golden Boat ($18.80) for Chinese New Year. The Golden Ingot pizz-sta (mix of pizza and pasta) is packed with prawns, squids and crab stick amid an array of cheeses and housemade spicy jjamppong mayo. Golden Boat's prawns, squids and scallops are encased in the brand's signature black rice dough in the form of a calzone. The Golden Ingot Set ($43.80) and Golden Boat Set ($36.80) come with jjamppong mayo chicken wings, drinks and dessert.
WHERE (MRT): 04-03/04 Bugis+, 201 Victoria Street (Bugis); B1-192/193 Northpoint City South Wing, 1 Northpoint Drive (Yishun) **WHEN:** From Feb 1 **PRICE:** $18.80 - $43.80 **TEL:** 6254-4307 (Bugis); 6634-0930 (Northpoint)

The Sampan's Maiden CNY Menu
The Sampan's first Chinese New Year menu comprises more than eight courses, including sesame-crusted salmon yusheng, chuka idako tossed in Sichuan chilli oil, kung pao chicken salad, jumbo lump crabmeat folded in spicy chilli crab sauce and duck leg char siew. The dessert of ying yang orange ginger tang yuan gets a modern touch and is served with housemade almond paste, black sesame pesto and citrus tea.
WHERE: 63 Boat Quay **MRT:** Clarke Quay/Raffles Place **WHEN:** Mon - Feb 8, 11.30am - 2.30pm (weekdays), 5pm - midnight (weekdays & Sat) **PRICE:** $198++ (for two people), $598++ (six), $788++ (eight) **TEL:** 6732-1698 **INFO:** E-mail info@thesampan.sg



ARTS

CONCERTS

Up & Down The Mountain – Martin Feng Ruan Recital
Ruan master Martin Feng and his musicians will present new arrangements of traditional Chinese tunes in a variety of music styles, including classical, pop, rock and jazz, as well as his original compositions, which are infused with Chinese philosophy.
WHERE: Esplanade Recital Studio, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Feb 15 and 16, 8pm **ADMISSION:** $38 ($27 for students, NSFs and seniors)
INFO: esplanade.com

Happy Chinese New Year Concert
Featuring Chinese tunes and pop music, this concert showcases home-grown young talents such as Jarrell Huang and 2013 Campus SuperStar winner Bonnie Loo. Chinese chamber music company Ding Yi's pipa musician and National Arts Council Young Artist Award recipient Chua Yew Kok, guzheng musician Yvonne Tay and suona musician Jacky Ng will also perform renditions of popular Chinese classics, specially arranged for the concert.
WHERE: China Cultural Centre Theatre, 217 Queen Street
MRT: Bencoolen/Bras Basah
WHEN: Feb 17, 3.30 & 7.30pm
ADMISSION: $28 **TEL:** 6348-5555
INFO: sistic.com.sg

EXHIBITIONS

Amek Gambar: Peranakans & Photography
The first commercially viable form of photography, invented in France in 1839, quickly made its way to South-east Asia. Peranakans were among the first subjects captured by photographers arriving from Europe. This exhibition presents early photographs of the community, including the oldest example in Singapore's national collection: a portrait of a Peranakan family taken in 1857 or 1858.
WHERE: Peranakan Museum, 39 Armenian Street **MRT:** City Hall/ Bras Basah **WHEN:** Till Feb 3, 10am - 7pm daily (Fridays till 9pm)
ADMISSION: Singaporeans and PRs: $5 (free for children and seniors); foreign residents and tourists: $13 ($9 for children and seniors)
TEL: 6332-7591
INFO: peranakanmuseum.org.sg

You've Got Mail!
A collection of 200 award-winning decorative envelopes from the Washington Calligraphers Guild (US), as well as 150 unusual stamps and philatelic materials from the Singapore Philatelic Museum, collection and lenders, are on display.
WHERE: Singapore Philatelic Museum, 23-B Coleman Street **MRT:** City Hall/ Bras Basah **WHEN:** Till March 17, 10am - 7pm daily **ADMISSION:** Free for Singaporeans & PRs; Foreigners: $8 ($6 for child three - 12 years old)
TEL: 6337-3888 **INFO:** spm.org.sg

Between The Lines – The Chinese Cartoon Revolution
A collaboration between Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall and the Memorial Museum of 1911 Revolution in Guangzhou, the exhibition examines the links between the 1911 revolution in China and the emergence of Chinese cartoons in Singapore. On display are close to 150 Chinese cartoons, as well as related artefacts and images from Singapore and China, between the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century.
WHERE: Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall, 12 Tai Gin Road
MRT: Toa Payoh **WHEN:** Till July 7, 10am - 5pm **ADMISSION:** Free for Singaporeans & PRs **TEL:** 6256-7377
INFO: sysnmh.org.sg

Reunite 2019 Young Talent Programme Exhibition
The exhibition, in its seventh edition, sees the return of some artists from the first three editions and highlights the recent works of eight talented artists during Singapore Art Week. This collaboration between Affordable Art Fair Singapore and Ion Art supports the talented young artists who, over the years, have continued developing artistic projects and quality artworks.
WHERE: Ion Art Gallery, Level 4 Ion Orchard, 2 Orchard Turn **MRT:** Orchard
WHEN: Till Sun, 10am - 10pm daily
ADMISSION: Free
INFO: ionorchard.com

The ARTery Pop-Up Art Fair
Non-profit art organisation Art Outreach is presenting a pop-up art fair for 14 local and international galleries affected by the cancellation of Art Stage Singapore.
It is supported by Marina Bay Sands, National Arts Council, Singapore Tourism Board and Economic Development Board.
WHERE: Hall A, Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre, 10 Bayfront Avenue **MRT:** Bayfront **WHEN:** Till Sun, 11am - 7pm **ADMISSION:** Free

CaREhab 2019
This second edition of CaREhab features an innovative and inclusive platform for individuals, institutions and communities in South-east Asia, Australia and New Zealand, with a focus on neurorehabilitation, community rehabilitation, geriatrics and pain management. The organisers will be launching The Medical Consumables & Equipment Exhibition, featuring up to 100 regional exhibitors.
WHERE: Hall 3A Singapore Expo, 1 Expo Drive **MRT:** Expo **WHEN:** Feb 22 & 23, 8am - 6pm **ADMISSION:** Free
TEL: 6403-2100 **INFO:** E-mail carehab@singex.com

BeautyAsia 2019
BeautyAsia 2019 will showcase a comprehensive range of cosmetics, skincare and beauty-related products from all over the world, as well as cutting-edge technology and hands-on product demonstrations. BeautyAsia incorporates SpaAsia, HealthAsia and NaturalAsia.
WHERE: Halls 401 - 403, Level 4 Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre, 1 Raffles Boulevard
MRT: Promenade/Esplanade
WHEN: Feb 25 - 27, 11am - 7pm
ADMISSION: Free
INFO: beautyasia.com.sg

THEATRE

Off Centre: By The Necessary Stage
The Necessary Stage's landmark play, Off Centre, returns 26 years after its premiere. Written by Haresh Sharma and directed by Alvin Tan, the play is best remembered for its honest and unflinching look at mental illness and the stigma surrounding it. It follows the unlikely friendship between Saloma and Vinod and traces their journeys as they deal with their personal conflicts as well as social prejudices against mental health.
WHERE: Victoria Theatre, 9 Empress Place **MRT:** Raffles Place **WHEN:** Feb 7, 8 & 11 - 15: 8pm; Feb 9 & 16: 3, 8pm; Feb 10 & 17: 3pm **ADMISSION:** $36 - $45 (20 per cent discount for students, seniors and NSFs)
TEL: 6348-5555 **INFO:** sistic.com.sg

Four Four Eight
Inspired by British playwright Sarah Kane's last work, 4.48 Psychosis, Young Artist Award recipient Liu Xiaoyi presents a new work that leads the audience into a social construct where every audience member becomes a participant in a space of gathering and camaraderie and also urban loneliness – the bar.
WHERE: The ExciseMan Whisky Bar, 02-27 Esplanade Mall
MRT: Esplanade/City Hall
WHEN: Feb 19 - 23, 6 - 11.30pm
ADMISSION: $58
INFO: esplanade.com

Love Letters
This production, presented in Mandarin and Cantonese, explores the love and loss shared between a pair of childhood friends. Each performance features a different pair of actors – Hong Kong theatre practitioners Rensen Chan and Jo Ngai; and Nelson Chia and Mia Chee of Singapore's Nine Years Theatre.
WHERE: Esplanade Recital Studio, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Feb 22, 8pm; Feb 23, 3 & 8pm; Feb 24, 3pm; in Mandarin (English surtitles) and in Cantonese (Chinese and English surtitles)
ADMISSION: $38
INFO: esplanade.com

ArtsPicks

Olivia Ho recommends

M1 SINGAPORE FRINGE FESTIVAL



ANGKAT: A DEFINITIVE, ALTERNATIVE, RECLAIMED NARRATIVE OF A NATIVE
Salma, an aspiring singer, is the adopted daughter of Mak, a former islander trying to cope with moving to mainland Singapore.
Both struggle with identity and belonging in this subversive play about mothers and daughters, written by Nabilah Said and directed by Noor Effendy Ibrahim. The play features Adib Kosnan and Moli Mohter (both above).
In Malay with English surtitles.
WHERE: Nafa Studio Theatre, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts Campus 3, 151 Bencoolen Street
MRT: Bencoolen; Bras Basah
WHEN: Today, 8pm
ADMISSION: $27 from Sistic
INFO: www.singaporefringe.com



Q&A (THE 36 QUESTIONS)
British-Israeli choreographer Rachel Erdos and her troupe, Rachel Erdos and Dancers, turn a famous 1977 psychological study about the 36 questions meant to make pairs of strangers fall in love – "Would you like to be famous?" or "What is your most terrible memory?" and so on – into a playful, intimate dance production (left).
WHERE: Esplanade Theatre Studio, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** City Hall / Esplanade **WHEN:** Today and tomorrow, 8pm **ADMISSION:** $27 from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to www.sistic.com.sg)

PHOTOS: ARIFFIN JAMAR, DAN BEN ARI, NABILAH SAID & NOOR EFFENDY IBRAHIM

SINGAPORE ART WEEK



DIGIMUSE PRESENTS
The National Museum of Singapore's latest DigiMuse showcase features seven projects that meld art, culture and technology. These include Face Of The Day (above), a culmination of fashion veteran Yang Derong's year-long project to dress himself up as a different "face" every day. He makes cultural references, photographing himself as each of the Eight Immortals from Chinese mythology, and is also inspired by current affairs such as last year's summit between American President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.
WHERE: National Museum of Singapore, 93 Stamford Road
MRT: Bras Basah; Dhoby Ghaut
WHEN: Till Feb 17, 10am to 7pm daily
ADMISSION: Free with general admission
INFO: www.nationalmuseum.sg

OF WAX, DYES AND LABOUR
Seven young Singapore-based artists pay homage to the rich, painstaking tradition of batik across a wide range of practices, from ceramics to illustration to print-making.
The exhibition includes works by Aklili Zakaria, Almostasthma, AmirahRau, Fajrina Razak, Lee Wan Xiang, Shane Ng and Yang Jie.
Fajrina, who is also the exhibition's curator, will be giving batik demonstration workshops using a tjanting tool. Participants can get communal hands-on experience painting on a 2.4m-long piece of fabric.
WHERE: Malay Heritage Centre, 85 Sultan Gate **MRT:** Bugis/ Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Till Feb 9, 10am to 6pm on Tuesdays to Sundays. Closed on Mondays. The batik workshops are tomorrow, 1.30 to 3.30pm, and Sunday, 10.30am to 12.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free for Singapore citizens and permanent residents, general admission for others. The workshops are free, register at peatix.com/ event/585750
INFO: www.facebook.com/owdal

FilmPicks

Yip Wai Yee recommends



JAPANESE FILM FESTIVAL
Who does not love a hearty bowl of ramen? For the three main characters in the film Lost In Ramen (2018, above), their connection to it is so much more than just a quick meal.

Find out how a bowl of noodles manages to link a high school girl, a grieving restaurant owner and a food expert in the film showing at the Japanese Film Festival, an annual event that showcases some of the best of Japanese cinema.
WHERE: Shaw Theatres Lido, Shaw House, 350 Orchard Road; The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road **MRT:** Orchard (Shaw Theatres Lido)/Nicoll Highway (The Projector) **WHEN:** Till Feb 10 **ADMISSION:** From $13 a film, from www.shaw.sg and theprojector.sg



SINGAPORE MENTAL HEALTH FILM FESTIVAL
Even though more information about mental health is now available, there is still a lot of stigma surrounding it.
The Singapore Mental Health Film Festival aims to tackle negative attitudes by screening a series of films that highlights various mental health issues. Acclaimed Hong Kong drama Mad World (2016), which stars Shawn Yue (above) as a man struggling with bipolar disorder, is part of the line-up.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road **MRT:** Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Feb 21 to 24
ADMISSION: $18 from smhff.peatix.com

STATE OF MOTION 2019: A FEAR OF MONSTERS
The mythical Orang Minyak and Pontianak figures have long terrified and fascinated many Singaporeans in horror films, but what is their history and how did they come about?

Find out more at this film history exhibition, which examines the various monsters featured in iconic South-east Asian films. Look out for fun horror movie-themed artefacts including posters, film memorabilia, as well as collectable toys.
WHERE: National Library Building, Plaza, 100 Victoria Street **MRT:** Bugis
WHEN: Tomorrow till Feb 24
ADMISSION: Free
INFO: www.stateofmotion.sg

PHOTOS: GOLDEN VILLAGE PICTURES, SINGAPORE FILM SOCIETY, UIP



SCHINDLER'S LIST 25TH ANNIVERSARY (M18)
196 minutes

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of Steven Spielberg's masterpiece Schindler's List (1993), a fully restored version of the acclaimed work returns to the big screen.

Set in World War II, this inspirational true story about how a man named Oskar Schindler (played by Liam Neeson, above) managed to save the lives of more than 1,000 Jews has been included on numerous "best of" cinema lists. It also won seven Academy Awards, including for Best Picture.
WHERE: Major cinemas islandwide **WHEN:** Now showing
ADMISSION: From $9.50, check the various cineplexes for details

FILMS

Green Book (2019, PG13)
Starring Viggo Mortensen (The Lord Of The Rings trilogy) and Academy Award winner Mahershala Ali (Moonlight, Hidden Figures), Green Book is a warm-hearted and surprisingly funny road-trip adventure based on a true friendship that transcended race, class and the 1962 Mason-Dixon line, which today demarcates four states in the United States.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Today, 7.20pm; tomorrow, 8.10pm; Sun, 8.15pm; Tue - Wed, 8pm (Green Room)
ADMISSION: $13.50 (standard), $11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

The Old Man And The Gun (2018, PG13)
Real-life career criminal Forrest Tucker (Robert Redford) is in his 70s, but is in no hurry to slow down his bank-robbing career. Wrapped up in the pursuit are detective John Hunt (Casey Affleck), who becomes captivated with Forrest's commitment to his craft, and a woman (Sissy Spacek) who loves him in spite of his chosen profession.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway
WHEN: Tomorrow (Green Room) & Sun (Redrum), 2pm; Tue & Wed, 8.30pm (Redrum) **ADMISSION:** $13.50 (standard), $11.50 (concession)
INFO: theprojector.sg

The Silk And The Flame (2018, M18)
The survival of a rural Chinese family depends on Yao, a closeted middle-aged man whose father's dying wish is a continuation of the family line. Yao travels from Beijing to a village of 300 people where his mother, who became deaf and mute after a medical accident, struggles to bring father and son closer together during the Chinese New Year. In Mandarin with English subtitles.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway
WHEN: Tomorrow, 3pm; Sun, 7.50pm (Redrum) **ADMISSION:** $13.50 (standard), $11.50 (concession)
INFO: theprojector.sg

Leaning Into The Wind: Andy Goldsworthy (2017, PG)
Award-winning and globally celebrated artist Andy Goldsworthy is known for both monumental works of land art and others that exist only briefly before being altered or erased by natural processes. Director Thomas Riedelsheimer intimately captures Goldsworthy's exploration of the world and himself through these ephemeral and permanent workings on the landscape, cities and his own body.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway
WHEN: Tomorrow & Feb 10, 5.30pm (Redrum) **ADMISSION:** $13.50 (standard), $11.50 (concession)
INFO: theprojector.sg

The Favourite (2018, R21)
In early 18th century, England is at war with the French. In the English palace, duck racing and pineapple eating are popular activities. Lady Sarah (Rachel Weisz), close friend of the frail Queen Anne (Olivia Coleman), governs the country in her stead while tending to her ill health and managing her mercurial temper. When a charming but ambitious new servant Abigail (Emma Stone) arrives, the unsuspecting Sarah is taken in and places Abigail under her wing.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Sun, 2.20pm (Green Room)
ADMISSION: $13.50 (standard), $11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

NATURE

Orchid Plant Sales
On every last Saturday of the month, some vendors will offer their collection of orchids for sale at the Botanic Gardens.
WHERE: Library Courtyard, entrance of Library. Botany Centre, Tanglin Gate. Singapore Botanic Gardens. 1 Cluny Road **MRT:** Botanic Gardens
WHEN: Sun, 8am - 6pm
ADMISSION: Free **INFO:** E-mail nparks_sbg_visitor_services@nparks.gov.sg

A Walk With Your Neighbours: The Monkeys Of Bukit Timah
The long-tailed macaques are the most conspicuous animals at Bukit Timah. Although commonly seen, they are very misunderstood. Few people realise that these monkeys also face power struggles and have kin networks, friends, foes and an otherwise complex social network. In many ways, they mirror our own society. This walk is led by experts from the Jane Goodall Institute Singapore.
WHERE: Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, Hindhede Drive (meet at Visitor Centre's Front Courtyard)
MRT: Beauty World **WHEN:** Feb 2, 5 - 6.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free, register at nparks.gov.sg **INFO:** E-mail sgmonkeywalk@gmail.com

TOURS

Chinatown CNY Festive Market Walk
Led by a Chinatown resident and guide, this walk is a fun combination of history, sightseeing and street art, as well as stories and customs of Chinese New Year. There will be tastings of Chinese New Year goodies.
WHERE/MRT: Meet at Chinatown MRT station **WHEN:** Today, tomorrow, Tue and Wed, Feb 1 and 2 (6 to 8pm)
ADMISSION: $48 a person
TEL: 8749-4007
INFO: everydaytourcompany.com

Night Heritage Tour
Did you know that the history of Fort Canning dates back to the 14th century? In this night tour held in conjunction with the Festival at the Fort @ i Light 2019, participants will hear the intriguing stories and legends that shroud the Forbidden Hill.
WHERE: Raffles House, Raffles Terrace, Fort Canning **MRT:** Fort Canning **WHEN:** Feb 1, 7 - 8.30pm
ADMISSION: Free, register at nparks.gov.sg **INFO:** E-mail jason_ooi@nparks.gov.sg

KIDS

Kids' Fun With Rainforest Life
The green domain at the end of Rifle Range Road is home to an assemblage of wildlife unique to the tropical rainforest. This tour is organised by Nature Society (Singapore) (NSS).
WHERE: Rifle Range Road (meeting point to be advised later)
MRT: Beauty World
WHEN: Feb 24, 8 - 10 am
ADMISSION: $2 a child (NSS member), $10 a child (non-member); register child (four - 12 years old) at tinyurl.com/nsskidsevent (closing date: Feb 16) **INFO:** E=mail gloria_seow@yahoo.com

OTHERS

SG Farmers' Market @ Cairnhill Community Club
The market will feature more than 18 Singapore farmers, with vegetables, eggs, fish, mushrooms and other fresh produce on sale. Visitors can also check out cooking demonstrations with special Chinese New Year recipes and stand to win prizes at the Spin & Win and lucky draw.
WHERE: Multi-Purpose Hall, Cairnhill Community Club (opposite Newton Circus Food Centre Carpark)
MRT: Newton **WHEN:** Tomorrow & Sun, 9am - 2pm **ADMISSION:** Free
INFO: www.ava.gov.sg

Magie A Trois – A Night Of Illusions, Magic & Mentalism
Home-grown magicians Adeline, Mark & TK will perform a show filled with spectacular illusions, mind-blowing mentalism and ground-breaking digital magic.
WHERE: Black Box at Goodman Arts Centre, 01-53 Block M, 90 Goodman Road **MRT:** Mountbatten **WHEN:** Mon, 8 - 9.30pm **ADMISSION:** $25, tickets and info at artfuldeceptions.com/magictix

LAST CALL

SSO Subscription Concert: Lan Shui's Farewell
In his final concert as music director of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Shui directs Mahler's monumental Resurrection Symphony, a work close to his heart.
WHERE: Esplanade Concert Hall, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/City Hall **WHEN:** Today & tomorrow, 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** $15 - $88 (30 per cent discount for students, national servicemen, seniors and persons with disabilities) **INFO:** esplanade.com

Homesick
This Alfian Sa'at play presented by King Edward VII HallPlay 18/19 is set in 2003 Singapore, when the Sars outbreak forcefully brought the Koh family together, a family which has otherwise been left detached for years. It tackles the issue of immigration, leaving the audience to ponder the true meaning of belonging in modern-day Singapore.
WHERE: NUS University Cultural Centre Theatre, 50 Kent Ridge Crescent **MRT:** Kent Ridge
WHEN: Today, 7pm; tomorrow, 1.30 & 7pm **ADMISSION:** $20 a ticket ($85 for five tickets) **TEL:** 8139-6748 (Natalie), 9370-3816 (Kezia) or 8138-7092 (Megan)
INFO: facebook.com/KEhallplay

• The listings on these Happenings pages are free. Write to Life Happenings, Life, The Straits Times,1000 Toa Payoh North, Singapore 318994 or e-mail stlife@sph.com.sg at least two weeks ahead. Include the name of the event, organiser, venue, date and time, ticket prices and nearest MRT station, as well as your name, address and contact number. We reserve the right to edit or reject items. Go to www.straitstimes.com (click on Lifestyle) for more listings.

Was Bryan Singer expose timed to ride on Oscars?

NEW YORK • Was the latest "expose" of Bryan Singer's alleged sexual misconduct timed to ride on the news of Bohemian Rhapsody's nomination for best movie at next month's Oscars?

That is the suspicion of the movie director after the Atlantic published the story on Wednesday.

Though the article appeared in the Atlantic, it was written by two Esquire reporters, Alex French and Maximillian Potter.

It includes the accounts of four new accusers and follows several others that have surrounded Singer – known for directing multiple X-Men movies and Bohemian Rhapsody – for the past 20 years.

Singer claims that Esquire chose not to publish the article after "careful fact-checking" and due to "the lack of credible sources".

"Again, I am forced to reiterate that this story rehashes claims from bogus lawsuits filed by a disreputable cast of individuals willing to lie for money or attention," his statement reads.

"And it is no surprise that, with Bohemian Rhapsody being an award-winning hit, this... smear piece has been conveniently timed to take advantage of its success."

The reporters wrote: "Some of the alleged victims say they were seduced... while underage; others say they were raped."

French and Potter said their story ran in the Atlantic because Hearst, which owns Esquire, killed it even after it went through a full editorial process, which included fact-checking and a Hearst lawyer's approval.

The Atlantic ran the article a day after the Queen biopic Bohemian Rhapsody got the Oscar nod.

Twentieth Century Fox fired Singer from the project due to his unreliable behaviour in 2017, a few weeks before production on the film was completed, and Dexter Fletcher took over.

But Singer still received the directing credit.

WASHINGTON POST

Win tickets to Westlife Q&A session

Anjali Raguraman

Irish boyband Westlife are mounting their comeback and that includes stopping by Singapore for an exclusive Q&A session with their fans on Jan 31 at 6pm.

The location for the event has yet to be announced.

The quartet – comprising Nicky Byrne, Kian Egan, Mark Feehily and Shane Filan – returned with their first single in eight years, Hello My Love, earlier this month.

Former member Brian McFadden, who left the group in 2004 to pursue a solo career, is not part of the reunion.

The song, co-written by British pop star Ed Sheeran, is the lead single from the group's eleventh studio album, which will be released later this year.

According to a status update posted on the band's Facebook page, the group are expected to be in town from Tuesday to Feb 1.

Passes to the Q&A session, organised by Universal Music Singapore, can be won via lnk.to/westlifeinsg

The contest is open to Spotify Premium users who have to log in and stream the single, and Apple Music/iTunes users who have to purchase the single on iTunes and upload a screengrab of their purchase. It ends at noon on Jan 27.

Westlife's reunion, announced last October, coincided with the 20th anniversary of the group's formation.

The clean-cut boyband, who enjoyed peak success in the 2000s, are responsible for worldwide smash hits such as My Love, Swear It Again and If I Let You Go.

The group have also announced The Twenty Tour, which kicks off in May and will see them touring Europe.

anjalir@sph.com.sg



Lady Gaga at the 24th annual Critics' Choice Awards in California. She has been nominated for a Best Actress Oscar for her work in A Star Is Born. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Good news comes late to Lady Gaga

LOS ANGELES • Three hours after the world learnt that Lady Gaga had been nominated for a Best Actress Oscar for her work in A Star Is Born, the singer herself found out.

"I've been trying to get some sleep because I'm on showbiz time," she said.

She was in Los Angeles for a few days before her Las Vegas residency resumed, and instead of waking up at just past 5am when the nominations were read, she simply slept in.

"I woke up around 8.30 and I didn't know anything about it," she said.

The first call she placed was to her manager, who broke the good news, "and I just burst into tears".

Referring to the flood of congratulatory text messages, Lady Gaga, whose real name is Stefani Germanotta, said: "The ones that mean the most to me are the ones that come from my family.

"These are not Oscar nominations for me; these are Oscar nominations for the Germanottas.

"I come from an Italian-immigrant family, and this feels like a very big win for them. This film was a lot of hard work, and I wouldn't know that hard work if I didn't know the hard work of the lineage of my family."

How would she celebrate her Oscar nomination?

"Well, tonight, I'm very much looking to see my dear friend Elton John play here in Los Angeles for his farewell tour," she said. NYTIMES

Wu Xiubo slammed for reporting alleged mistress

SHANGHAI • Chinese actor Wu Xiubo has been slammed for his "un-gentlemanly" actions over his handling of an alleged affair.

The parents of actress Chen Menglin said he had asked her to return to China from abroad to settle their matters, only for her to be arrested by the police.

The parents added that he had told the authorities that Chen had blackmailed him.

The Global Times reported that Chen had posted last year about her seven-year romance with Wu, accusing him of ditching her for other women.

She claimed to have spent almost all of 2016 in a hotel room doing his laundry and cooking for him while he was working on a television show.

Her parents said the couple later reached an agreement over a "break-up" fee.

Chen left China but Wu, 50, did not pay her the full sum.

Wu's lawyer, in response, said Chen was arrested for suspected extortion.

Wu's wife posted online that her family was blackmailed for 18 months by Chen, who could face 10 years in jail if convicted.

While Wu has drawn flak over his straying ways, some netizens also think that Chen is no angel and have branded her as a gold-digger.

Meanwhile, the impact of the scandal has spread to other areas.

A romantic comedy A Boyfriend For My Girlfriend, starring Wu and Bai Baihe, was slated to open on Feb 5, the first day of Chinese New Year, but that has been scrapped, with no new date mentioned.

And TV serial City Of Desire, which stars Wu and Angelababy, is now reportedly headed for a Web release.

On social media



PHOTO: CARRIE UNDERWOOD/INSTAGRAM

BABY, IT'S YOU: Carrie Underwood suffered three miscarriages from 2017 to last year. But those heartbreaks ended on Monday when she and husband Mike Fisher welcomed their second child.

Posting the happy news on Instagram, Underwood, 35, wrote: "Jacob Bryan Fisher entered the world in the wee hours of the morning on Monday. His mum, dad and big brother couldn't be happier for God to trust them with taking care of this little miracle. Our hearts are full, our eyes are tired and our lives are forever changed. Life is good."

She posted a photo of her husband – a former professional ice hockey player – with the baby.

In an interview last year, the singer, whose first child, Isaiah, is three years old, had poured out her frustration and anger over the miscarriages, wondering why she was constantly being thwarted in her wish to have a second child.

"Didn't work out. So, at that point, it was just kind of like, 'Okay, like, what's the deal? What is all of this?' Why on earth do I keep getting pregnant if I can't have a kid?"

In short

Shilin Night Market pop-up comes to Singapore

A pop-up market inspired by the famous Shilin Night Market in Taiwan makes its debut in Singapore in April. Called Shilin Ye Shi, it will be held over two weekends – April 19 to 21 and April 26 to 28 from 3 to 11pm at The Grounds@Kranji at the Singapore Turf Club.

While no vendors have been announced yet, there will be a mix of food and retail stalls run by Taiwanese and local entrepreneurs.

Ozzy bat soft toy sold out

LOS ANGELES • Has Ozzy Osbourne gone batty, releasing a toy?

But fans must give credit to the rocker's business instincts, for the first batch of the 0.3m-tall plush bat has sold out, at US$40 (S$54) a pop.

The item celebrates the 37th anniversary of Osbourne biting the head off a bat at a concert in 1982.

Long before he became reality-show fodder, he terrified parents as the frontman of Black Sabbath.

The rock band's music was loud, its album covers were decorated with monsters and Osbourne was nicknamed Prince of Darkness.

In 1979, the band fired him due to his erratic behaviour, and he decided to go it alone.

At the concert in Iowa, he picked up a bat which he thought was a rubber one thrown on stage by a fan.

He put it in his mouth and chomped down.

"Immediately, though, something felt wrong. Very wrong.

"For a start, my mouth was instantly full of this warm, gloopy liquid, with the worst after-taste you could ever imagine," he wrote in his memoir I Am Ozzy (2009).

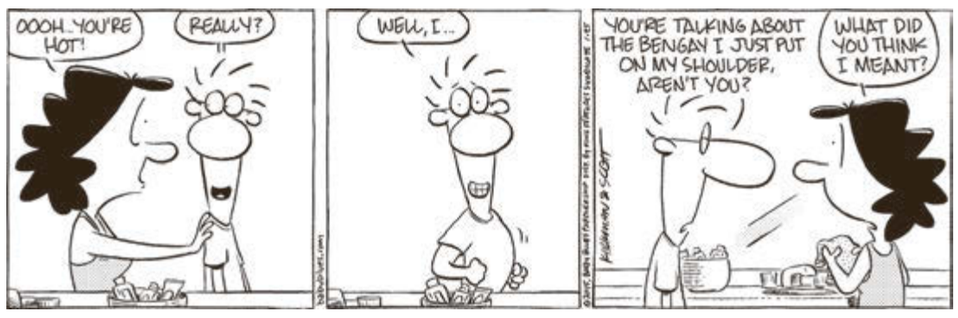
"I could feel it staining my teeth and running down my chin.

"Then, the head in my mouth twitched... I didn't just go and eat a bat, did I?"

WASHINGTON POST

Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (IE)
9.45 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)
10.00 Films & Stars (PG) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (HD) (PG) (V)
PM
12.00 Martha Bakes 6 (HD) (IE)
12.30 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)
2.30 Talking Point 2018 (HD) (CA)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
3.45 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)
4.00 Make You Laugh Out Loud 3 (PG) (V)
4.30 Survivor 36 (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (HD) (PG) (V)
6.30 Dragonheart 3: The Sorcerer's Curse (PG) (CC) (M)
8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 (HD)
9.30 On The Red Dot – Old Enough! (CA)
10.00 The Last Witch Hunter (PG13) (M) (Premiere)
AM
12.10 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
12.40 Code Of Law 4 (PG13) (D)
1.40 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (V)
2.30 Hawaii Five-O 7 (PG13) (D)
3.20 The Dr Oz Show 9 (HD) (PG13) (IE)
4.10 Martha Bakes 6 (IE)
4.40 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)
5.50 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 X Warrior – International PK Matches (V)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (CA)
8.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Focus (CC) (CA)
10.30 The Mermaid (Chinese Opera)
11.30 How Are You? (PG) (CC) (D)
PM
12.30 JML Home Shopping (Infomercial)
1.00 News 8 At One (HD)
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Cookie Master (SC)
2.30 The Precedents (PG) (D)
3.30 Golden Age Talentime (HD) (CC) (V)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 118 Reunion (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (News)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Body SOS 7 (CC) (V)
8.30 Frontline (CA)
9.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight (HD)
10.30 Food And Beverage Investigators 8 (IE)
11.00 Princess Agents (PG) (CC) (D)
AM
12.00 The Princess Weiyoung (PG) (D)
1.00 Lady Investigators (D)
2.00 A Time To Dance (D)
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Heroes Of Remix (V)
4.30 King Of The Kitchens (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Menu (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Hello Taiwan (IE)
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 Hello Taiwan (IE)
AM
12.30 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
06.00 Singapore Tonight
07.00 First Look Asia
09.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Champions for Change
11.00 News Now
PM
01.02 Insight
02.00 News Now
04.02 Champions For Change
05.00 News Now
07.02 Edible Wild (CC)
07.30 A Beautiful World
08.00 Primetime Asia
09.02 Conversation With (CC)
09.30 Super Octogenarians (CC)
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Insight
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Asia Business First Weekend
1.02 Conversation With
1.30 Super Octogenarians
2.00 News Now
2.30 Correspondents' Diary
3.02 Champions for Change
4.00 News Now
4.30 Correspondents' Diary
5.02 Conversation With
5.30 Super Octogenarians
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)
3.30 Aasai Aasaiya – Cooking For Love (IE)
4.00 Priyasakhi
4.30 Thedal – Star Search 2016 (HD) (V)
5.30 Motu Patlu (S)
6.00 Suryaputhri 2 (Malayalam) (D)
7.00 Oru Oorilae (CC) (S)
7.30 Janani D/O Madhavan (CC) (S)
8.00 Uyire (PG) (CC) (D)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Indian Beat 9 (HD) (CC) (IE)
9.30 Tamil Talkies: Rhythmn (PG) (CC) (M)
AM
12.30 Tamil Seithi (News) (R)
1.00 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Twirlywoos (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Doki (HD) (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
11.00 Peppa Pig (P)
11.30 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)
PM
12.00 Hiccup & Sneeze (P)
12.30 Teddies (P)
1.00 Coconut The Little Dragon (P)
1.30 Twirlywoos (P)
2.00 Doki (HD) (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
3.00 Peppa Pig (P)
3.30 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)
4.00 Odd Squad (HD) (S)
4.30 Captain Flinn And The Pirate Dinosaurs (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Marcus Level (HD) (S)
6.00 The Lion Guard (S)
6.30 The Diary Of Amos Lee (S)
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (HD) (CC) (S)
7.30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (HD) (CC) (S)
8.00 Turning Mecard (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)
9.00 Tryfactor (CC) (Sports)
9.30 One Championship 2018/19 – One Warrior Series 2 (HD) (Sports)
10.00 One Championship 2018/19: Hero's Ascent (Manila) (PG13) (Sports) (Live)
11.30 One Championship Weekly (HD) (PG13) (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

SURIA

PM
4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (PG) (D)
5.00 Ti Amo, Sweetheart 100 Hari! (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 Kem Tahan (IE)
6.30 Makan Xtrim (HD) (PG) (IE)
7.00 Makmum Yang Paling Aku Cinta (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)
8.30 Mamaku Sayang (CC) (S)
9.00 Hati Belum Berkubur (PG) (CC) (Telemovie)
11.00 Juang Seorang Usahawan (CC) (IE)
11.30 Berita (HD) (News)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs; CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture; D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies; P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance; R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom; V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singteltv.com.sg

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 - April 19)
You may be leading or following, but as long as you are working as part of a team, you are quite strong.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)
Do something artistic and let your creative energy out. Your deepest soul is sure to come to the surface.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)
Start as many new projects as you can. At least a few of them are sure to take off.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)
Life is not working out the way you would like it to. Ride this phase out and things should improve.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)
You need to get out there and mix it up romantically. Whatever you do, make it special.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)
You cannot make up your mind, but you should direct your energy towards something positive.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)
Make the most of your sweet, romantic side with a gift for someone special.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)
Ideas are meant to be shared, so do not hold anything in. A brainstorm session will make them stronger.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)
You have a plan and can take care of all the details, but it is a good time to enlist support from others.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)
You are working hard on your day off, but you should not neglect your social life.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)
You need to deal with something that only you know how to handle – your energy is just right for solving it.

Pisces (Feb 19 - March 20)
You focus too much on how much you have to put up with. Consider what you get in return instead.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
6.40 Pawn Stars 18/**7.05** Storage Wars 11
7.35 Storage Wars: Miami
8.00 Storage Wars 10/**8.30** Pawn Stars 19
9.30 Forged In Fire 5
10.25 History Drama: Knightfall
11.20 The Warfighters
PM
12.15 Football Godfathers
1.10 History Drama: Vikings 5
2.05 History Drama: Knightfall
3.00 Storage Wars: Miami
3.30 The Pickers 11
4.25 History Drama: Vikings 5
5.20 Forged In Fire 5
6.15 The Pickers 11/**7.10** Pawn Stars 19
8.05 Storage Wars: Miami
8.30 Storage Wars 10
9.00 Swamp Mysteries With Troy Landry
9.55 Alone 4/**10.50** Genius
11.45 Football Godfather

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
6.00 Dance Moms 6/**7.00** Idol Moms
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
9.00 Little Women: Terra's Big House
10.00 Project Runway: Fashion Startup
11.00 Zoo 3
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 6
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 I Killed My BFF/**3.35** Born This Way 2
4.30 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Idol Moms
7.00 Making A Model With Yolanda Hadid
8.00 The Rap Game 3
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 Ten: Murder Island
11.35 Idol Moms

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
6.00 Anger Management
7.45 Blood Work
9.30 The Time Traveler's Wife
11.15 Phantom Thread
PM
1.20 The Peacemaker (NC16)
3.25 Crashing 3 (NC16)
3.55 The Finest Hours (2016)
5.50 My Little Pony: The Movie (2017)
7.30 Despicable Me 3
9.00 The Mummy (2017) (NC16)
10.50 12 Strong (NC16)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
8.50 Vendetta: A True Story
10.45 The HBO Movie Show
11.10 Tango One (NC16)
PM
1.00 The Ghost And The Darkness
2.50 Mrs. Harris
4.25 Cellular
6.00 Space Cowboys/**8.15** Catwoman
10.00 Black Hawk Down (NC16)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
8.15 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
9.15 Dowry (HD)/**10.15** Super Boys 2 (HD)
11.45 Fun Abroad (HD)
PM
12.15 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)/**1.30** Tomorrow With You (HD)
2.45 Sound Of My Dream 2 (HD)
4.45 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)/**6.00** Dowry (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
8.00 Mr Player 7 (HD)
10.00 Singer 2019 (Live) (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
7.00 Tennis: ATP 500 Citi Open Day 7 Finals
9.00 Extreme Sports: World Surf League 2018: Billabong Pipe Masters Highlights
10.00 Tennis: Deuce 2019
10.30 Tennis: ATP World Tour Uncovered 2019
11.00 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018
PM
12.00 Table Tennis: Seamaster 2019 ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open: Men's Semi-finals/**2.00** Table Tennis: Seamaster 2019 ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open: Women's & Men's Singles Finals
4.00 Tennis: ATP Champions Tour 2018
4.30 Cycling: Tour Of Hainan 2018 Highlights/**5.40** ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2019: Ice Dance Short Dance
9.30 FEI Equestrian World 2018
10.00 Tennis: Deuce 2019
10.30 Tennis: ATP World Tour Uncovered 2019/**11.00** ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2019: Ladies Free Skating

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
7.30 Magazine: Abu Dhabi Grand Slam Jiu-Jitsu World Tour 2018 H/Ls – Rio De Janeiro
PM
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
12.30 Football: EFL Carabao Cup 2018 Semi-finals 2, Leg 2 Chelsea Vs Tottenham Hotspur
2.30 National Basketball League 2018/19 – NBL Slam
3.00 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG)
4.30 National Basketball League Round 15 Brisbane Bullets Vs Sydney Kings (Live)
6.30 Magazine: Trans World Sport 2019
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport. TV
8.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 San Miguel Alab Pilipinas Vs Westports Malaysia Dragons (Live)
10.00 Wrestling: WWE Bottomline (PG)
11.00 Football: EFL Carabao Cup 2018 Semi-finals 2, Leg 2 Chelsea Vs Tottenham Hotspur
AM
1.00 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG)
2.30 National Basketball League Round 15 Brisbane Bullets Vs Sydney Kings
4.30 National Basketball League 2018/19 – NBL Slam/**4.50** HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series 2018/19 Round 3 Hamilton Day 1 Match 1 – 8 (Live)

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzy And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears/**10.30** Supernoobs
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 The Powerpuff Girls
3.00 Running Man Animation
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 OK K.O.! Let's Be Heroes
6.00 Apple & Onion
6.30 Running Man Animation
7.00 Summer Camp Island
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 Transformers: Cyberverse
9.30 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Summer Island Camp
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.45 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
7.30 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
8.20 MacGyver
9.10 American Ninja Warrior 8
10.00 Killjoys 3
10.50 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 3
11.40 Carnage
PM
12.35 MacGyver
1.25 Quantico 2
2.15 American Ninja Warrior 8
3.05 Killjoys 3
3.55 Carnage
4.45 MacGyver
5.35 American Ninja Warrior 8
6.25 MacGyver 3
7.15 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
8.10 Instinct
9.05 Seal Team 2
9.55 Evolution
11.55 Instinct

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.50 Top 20 Funniest
7.40 Major Crimes
8.30 Supergirl 2
9.20 The Flash 3
10.10 Clipaholics
11.00 Top 20 Funniest 2
11.45 Final Destination
PM
1.30 The Big Bang Theory 9
1.55 Friends 9
2.20 Clipaholics
3.10 Top 20 Funniest 2
4.00 The Flash 3
4.50 Supergirl 2
5.40 Top 20 Funniest
6.30 The Flash 3
7.20 The Big Bang Theory 9
7.45 Friends 9
8.10 The Big Bang Theory 12
8.35 Young Sheldon 2
9.00 Gotham 5
9.50 Pacific Rim

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
6.25 The Daily Show 24
6.50 Just For Laughs Gags 12
7.15 Kids Do The Craziest Things
7.40 Mr Bean
8.10 Your Face Or Mine 3
8.35 Most Ridiculous 2
9.05 Billy On The Street 5
9.30 Takeshi's Castle 4
9.55 Mr Bean
10.25 Most Ridiculous 2
10.50 Almost Royals 2
11.20 Saturday Night Live 43
PM
12.10 The Daily Show 24
12.35 The Goldbergs 5
1.25 Hot In Cleveland 5
1.50 Hot In Cleveland 6
2.15 The Comedy Jam
3.05 Takeshi's Castle 4
3.30 Most Ridiculous 2
3.55 The Goldbergs 5
4.45 Hot In Cleveland 5
5.10 Hot In Cleveland 6
5.35 The Jim Jefferies Show
6.00 The Daily Show 24
6.25 Caraoke Showdown
6.45 Above Average Presents
6.55 Your Face Or Mine 3
7.20 Most Ridiculous 2
7.50 Billy On The Street 5
8.10 Takeshi's Castle 4
8.35 The Goldbergs 5
9.25 Hot In Cleveland 6
9.50 Funny As Hell 3
10.20 Above Average Presents
10.30 Inside Amy Schumer
10.55 The Fuccons
11.00 The Jim Jefferies Show
11.25 The Fuccons
11.30 The Daily Show 24

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
7.00 First Love
8.00 Entrepreneurial Age
9.00 Eagle And Youngster
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 First Love
1.00 In The Name Of Love
2.00 100% Wife
4.10 Entrepreneurial Age
5.00 First Love
6.00 In The Name Of Love
7.00 100% Wife
9.10 First Love
10.00 Entrepreneurial Age
11.00 Eagle And Youngster

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Charmaine Yee
4.00 Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman
10.00 Cheryl Miles
PM
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kemin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7.16am/7.19pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 11.20pm/10.53am

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 2.30am (3m), 8.05am (1.3m), 1.50pm (3.3m), 8.37pm (0.4m). Desaru: 2.05am (3m), 7.37am (1.6m), 1.13pm (2.8m), 7.46pm (0.7m). Port Dickson: 4.18am (0.2m), 9.37am (2.6m), 4.34pm (0.3m), 10.06pm (2.7m). Mersing: 1.33am (3.4m), 7.49am (1.7m), 12.47pm (2.6m), 7.10pm (0.9m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 3.09am (2.9m), 8.54am (1.2m), 2.43pm (3.1m), 9.24pm (0.7m). Desaru: 2.45am (2.9m), 8.26am (1.5m), 2.11pm (2.7m), 8.35pm (1m). Port Dickson: 5am (0.3m), 10.21am (2.4m), 5pm (0.4m), 10.45pm (2.6m). Mersing: 2.12am (3.2m), 8.35am (1.6m), 1.49pm (2.6m), 7.58pm (1.2m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

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Thurs: 12.30pm & 1.30pm, Fri & Sat: 5pm & 6pm
Enjoy a distinguished lineup of artistes including award-winning jazz flutist Rit Xu, classical and pop musician Luan Ling and Indra Ismail Trio.

Traditional Drum Performances
26 Jan & 2 Feb: 2pm & 5pm, Front Foyer
Groove to the stirring beat of Chinese drums to welcome an uplifting new year.

LION DANCE SPECTACULAR

7 Feb: 11.30am, Main Atrium
Be exhilarated by a breathtaking lion dance performance, featuring gravity-defying stunts on high poles. No better way to usher in good luck and prosperity for the year ahead.

ABUNDANT OFFERS

Find everything you need for a flourishing season at the Metro Festive Fair from now to 3 Feb at Atrium I. Also, look out for festive promotions and deals from our stores.

For more details, visit www.paragon.sg or Concierge at Level 1. *Terms and conditions apply.

sph Reit

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B

HOME

62

NUMBER OF DAYS TUNG LOK'S CATERING KITCHEN AT S'PORE EXPO WAS SUSPENDED; OPERATIONS CAN NOW RESUME **B2**

Bak kwa prices up? It's CNY demand, say retailers

Increase not due to recent disruptions in import of live pigs from Indonesia, they say

Tiffany Fumiko Tay

Recent disruptions in the import of live pigs from Indonesia have had little impact on supply and prices thus far, raw pork and bak kwa sellers say.

With Chinese New Year less than two weeks away, queues have begun to form at popular bak kwa outlets in Chinatown, where prices for the barbecued meat are creeping up.

Retailers, who typically increase prices by a few dollars at this time of the year to cover additional labour and material needs, said bak kwa prices have remained stable this year at $55 to $58 per kg.

Shin Min Daily News reported on Tuesday that some raw pork sellers were concerned about a supply shortage as several recent shipments of live pigs from Indonesia did not arrive.

The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) said Singapore imports live pigs from two sources: Pulau Bulan in Indonesia and Sarawak, Malaysia. The pigs are slaughtered in Singapore and sold here as chilled pork.

"On some days in the past two weeks, there were no imports of live pigs from Pulau Bulan as the importer's barges were delayed," a spokesman said, adding that more pigs from Sarawak were slaughtered to mitigate the supply disruption.

Singapore also imports chilled pork from countries such as Australia and frozen pork from countries like Brazil. The overall supply of such pork in the market has remained stable, the AVA said.

A pork seller at the Chinatown market, who gave her name only as Mrs Poon, said she buys three to four pigs a day from Indonesia, but has not had to increase prices as her supplier has managed to cover the missed shipments.



With Chinese New Year less than two weeks away, long queues can be seen at popular Chinatown bak kwa outlets, such as Lim Chee Guan, whose signature pork slices for the day were sold out by lunchtime yesterday, though there were still many customers waiting to purchase other varieties. ST PHOTO: JOSEPH CHUA

A spokesman for bak kwa chain Lim Chee Guan said the effect of the disruption has been "manageable" as the firm uses pork from various sources. The price of its traditional sliced bak kwa increased by $6 over the weekend to $58, about the same as last year.

"Whether there will be further increases depends on stock and raw material costs which vary daily, but we try to keep it to the bare minimum," she said.

Kim Joo Guan, which has outlets in Chinatown and Novena, has increased its prices by $3 to $55 per kg for the festive period.

MORE FOR YEAR OF THE PIG

I'm buying more this year to give to family and friends. Hopefully it will bring more prosperity since it's the Year of the Pig.

MS LEE XIN EN, who queued outside Lim Chee Guan's New Bridge Road outlet for five hours to buy 40kg of the sweet meat.

Owner Arthur Ong said the fixed yearly increase is to cover additional packaging and manpower costs. It is unaffected by the supply disruption from Indonesia as it uses pork from Australia.

Kim Hock Guan, with outlets in Chinatown and Bencoolen, raised its price to $56 per kg two weeks ago.

Traditional sliced pork was selling at $56 per kg at Bee Cheng Hiang and Fragrance outlets in Chinatown when The Straits Times visited yesterday. Staff at both chains said prices have yet to increase, and will likely go up by a few dollars in the coming week.

Lim Chee Guan's signature pork slices had sold out at its three outlets by lunchtime, though dozens of people were seen queueing to buy other varieties.

Ms Lee Xin En, 50, who joined the queue outside its New Bridge Road outlet at about 8am, reached the front of the line at about 1pm and bought 40kg of the sweet meat.

Ms Lee, who works in customer service, said: "I'm buying more this year to give to family and friends. Hopefully it will bring more prosperity since it's the Year of the Pig."

tiffanyt@sph.com.sg

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Deposit Amount	Promotional Rates (p.a.)			
	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
RMB80,000 and above	2.80%	3.00%	3.20%	3.40%

USD Time Deposit Promotion

Deposit Amount	Promotional Rates (p.a.)			
	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
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Gear up for a bigger Chingay carnival



Shabana Begum

This year's Chingay carnival will be a bigger one, stretching over three days, and have attractions to draw the younger crowd.

The carnival was held for the first time last year to go with the annual Chingay Parade and it ran on the weekend after Chinese New Year.

This year, it will be held from Feb 15 to 17 in the open space behind the Singapore Flyer.

Highlights include a mini-karting circuit, family games such as a life-size version of Jenga, as well as art installations.

On Feb 17, the Formula One race track will transform into an adventure arena, where participants can tackle a series of 4m-high inflatable obstacle courses.

The carnival will run from 3pm to 10pm each day and admission is free. The Chingay Parade will be held on Feb 15 and 16, between 8pm and 9.30pm.

The People's Association, which organises the parade, collaborated with event management company Invade Industry on the programme. The company was behind Artbox Singapore, a creative market that saw a record-breaking 660,000 visitors over six days in 2017.

Invade Industry head of strategy Lee Haoming said yesterday: "Chingay has great content and excellent performers, but it's such a waste that a lot of the younger generation do not watch it or understand the art and creativity behind the parade."

One of the parade's highlights is the karting contingent from KF1 Karting Circuit. More than 30 go-karts will zip along a 270m route – or more than one-third of the procession route – at 100kmh. The contingent is made up of riders from 15 countries including Singapore, Thailand and Britain.

The karts will accompany a 24m-long float – the longest float at this year's parade – that will house a life-size replica of a Formula One car and 16 national athletes.

To mark the Singapore Bicentennial, the finale will showcase a 600-strong youth contingent who will don futuristic costumes and perform with props inspired by the screw-like structure of DNA.

The DNA motif will also dominate the finale float's design to symbolise the younger generation's commitment to building a future beyond 200 years, said Ms Jeanie Tan, chairman of Chingay 2019.

nshab@sph.com.sg



Above: A highlight at this year's Chingay Parade will be the karting contingent from KF1 Karting Circuit. Over 30 go-karts will zip along a 270m route – or more than one-third of the procession route – at 100kmh.

Left: Dance group Dance Inspiration at yesterday's Chingay 2019 media conference at the F1 Pit Building.
ST PHOTOS: ALPHONSUS CHERN



NEA lifts suspension on Tung Lok at S'pore Expo

Catering kitchen can resume operations now that food hygiene lapses have been addressed

Ng Huiwen

The National Environment Agency (NEA) lifted the suspension on Tung Lok Millennium's catering kitchen at Singapore Expo yesterday, 62 days after the restaurant group was hit by a food poisoning outbreak.

The NEA said in a statement it is satisfied that the measures to rectify the food hygiene lapses have been implemented, and operations at the kitchen at 1 Expo Drive can resume.

The Ministry of Health (MOH), NEA and Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority had earlier concluded joint investigations into the food poisoning incident, with 190 cases reported between Nov 19 and 21 last year.

The cases were traced to the consumption of food prepared at Tung Lok's premises catered for an event. No one was hospitalised and a majority of the victims had recovered by the time the MOH was informed of the outbreak, the NEA statement said.

The NEA suspended Tung Lok's operating licence on Nov 23 to protect consumers from public health risks.

Investigations identified several hygiene lapses and poor kitchen habits, including not providing soap for hand-washing and the improper use of ice-dispensing utensils for ready-to-eat ice.

An environmental swab taken from the table where the bento boxes were packed also tested positive for the *Bacillus cereus* bacteria, which can cause nausea, vomiting and abdominal cramps.

190

Number of reported cases of food poisoning from food prepared at Tung Lok's Singapore Expo kitchen between Nov 19 and 21 last year.

Tung Lok complied with NEA-stipulated measures during its suspension period, such as disposing all ready-to-eat food, thawed food and perishable food items.

It also cleaned and sanitised its premises, including equipment, utensils, work surfaces and toilets.

The restaurant group also submitted its plans to ensure that good hygiene standards are observed during food preparation, the NEA said.

These measures include providing soap for hand-washing, proper use of ice-dispensing utensils for ready-to-eat ice, and ensuring that its staff practise good food and personal hygiene at all times.

Staff who handle food have also since attended and passed the Basic Food Hygiene training course again.

This was part of an enhanced Food Hygiene Officer scheme announced last month, which requires these officers to undergo re-training and pass the WSQ Conduct Food and Beverage Hygiene Audit course before a suspended eatery can get its operating licence back.

The NEA said Tung Lok has appointed a new Food Hygiene Officer at Singapore Expo, and the person has gone through and passed the WSQ course.

The agency said it has also issued a warning to Tung Lok, on top of the 62-day suspension.

It will keep the caterer under close surveillance to ensure that it adheres to its food safety and hygiene plans.

In the statement, the NEA also reminded members of the public to be cautious about their food preparation practices, as food poisoning can also happen at home.

For health-related queries, the public can contact the MOH on 1800-225-4122.

To give feedback on hygiene lapses, contact the NEA at its 24-hour hotline on 1800-225-5632.

nghuiwen@sph.com.sg

Worker falls to death after rope attached to him snaps

He was painting exterior of hotel when rope got entangled with side mirror of passing bus

Cara Wong

A 27-year-old foreign construction worker fell to his death on Tuesday when the rope he was attached to snapped after a part of it became entangled with the side mirror of a passing bus.

The Indian national, who was painting the exterior of the Royal Plaza on Scotts, was secured to the rope and hovering several storeys above ground.

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM), which is investigating the incident, said the bottom of the rope became entangled with the bus, causing it to snap.

As a result, the worker fell to the ground, the ministry said in a statement to The Straits Times.

ST understands that the accident took place at the rear of the hotel building. It is not known if the private coach was ferrying passengers.

Police, who were notified of the industrial accident at 5.37pm, said the man was found motionless.

He was later pronounced dead at the scene by Singapore Civil Defence Force paramedics.

MOM said the worker was employed by CKR Paints and Coating Specialist. The main contractor for the works was Advanced Specialist.

All painting and cleaning works requiring rope access at Royal Plaza on Scotts have been halted.

When ST contacted CKR Paints and Coating Specialist, employees declined to comment on the accident. They also did not elaborate on whether the company would provide support to the worker's next of kin.

"The authorities are already looking into it, so we'll have to wait to see what they say," said an employee over the phone.

Investigations by MOM and the police are ongoing.

carawong@sph.com.sg

INVESTIGATIONS ONGOING

The authorities are already looking into it, so we'll have to wait to see what they say.

AN EMPLOYEE of CKR Paints and Coating Specialist, the employer of the worker who died, when asked to comment on the accident.

Taxi driver burned rival by igniting spray from aerosol can

Shaffiq Alkhatib

An argument between two taxi drivers turned violent when one of them ignited the stream of liquid from an aerosol can and aimed the flames at the other cabby.

The flash fire lasted three seconds and left Mr Lam Choon Chai, 61, with first-degree superficial burns to his left ear, cheek and neck.

His attacker, Ng Soon Kim, was sentenced to a year and two months' jail yesterday after pleading guilty to an assault charge.

The 65-year-old was also disqualified from driving all classes of vehicles for 1½ years and ordered to compensate Mr Lam $115 for hurting him.

The incident happened on May 1, 2017, at about 8pm. Mr Lam was in his vehicle, waiting in line at a VivoCity taxi stand, when Ng's taxi abruptly cut into his lane.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Grace Chua told the court that this almost caused Mr Lam's taxi to hit a wall.

He did not confront Ng at this point and both cabbies later picked up their passengers.

The two men then drove towards the traffic light junction of Harbourfront Walk and Telok Blangah Road, where they stopped their vehicles when the lights turned red.

Seeing that Ng's vehicle was next to his, Mr Lam wound down his front passenger seat window and hurled vulgarities at the older man.

DPP Chua said: "The accused then alighted from his taxi, taking a can of insecticide from his cab with him.

"He then stretched his hand into the victim's taxi through the open front passenger seat window, pointed the can of insecticide at the victim, before spraying the insecticide twice at the victim.

"The accused held the can of insecticide approximately 30cm away from the face of the victim when he sprayed the insecticide at the victim."

Some insecticide entered Mr Lam's eyes, hurting him, when Ng sprayed a second time.

Mr Lam's passenger then shouted at Ng, the court heard.

Undeterred, Ng returned to his taxi to retrieve a lighter.

He then ignited the stream from the aerosol can, causing Mr Lam to be injured.

Mr Lam later alerted the police and an ambulance took him to the Singapore General Hospital.

Ng is now out on bail of $5,000 and was ordered to surrender himself at the State Courts on Feb 19 to begin serving his sentence.

ashaffiq@sph.com.sg



Ng Soon Kim (above) was sentenced to jail for a year and two months for assault. He had sprayed insecticide at fellow cabby Lam Choon Chai twice before igniting the stream of liquid from the aerosol can. ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW









Staff packing items into boxes yesterday. The clinic is moving to Royal Square Medical Suites in Novena, where it will open with a new name: Lily Neo Clinic.



Dr Lily Neo after seeing the last patient at Tanglin Halt Clinic yesterday. Save for a few goodbye photos and last-minute packing, her last day at the clinic went by just like any other day. "It's too sad to try to do anything special. There is a sense of neighbourliness here that would be a pity to lose," she said. ST PHOTOS: GAVIN FOO



The clinic was one of the last few outlets still operating in its block ahead of a 2021 deadline to move out before demolition under a redevelopment scheme.

IT'S GOODBYE AFTER 34 YEARS

Iconic clinic in Tanglin Halt that shaped Lily Neo's concerns in Parliament moves to Novena

Yuen Sin

For the past 34 years, Tanglin Halt Clinic – located at the end of a candy-coloured row of shophouses at 39 Tanglin Halt Road – served as a gathering spot for residents.

Aches, pains and other common ailments were tended to by the doctor there. But other worries, such as family or financial concerns, were also soothed.

Residents traipsed down from the nearby *chap lau chu* (Hokkien for 10-storey buildings) to share homemade delicacies like *ngoh hiang*. Those who had moved away returned for a consultation and more.

Yesterday, the lights in the iconic clinic in one of Singapore's oldest public housing estates, nestled between Queenstown and Commonwealth, went off for the last time.

It was already one of the last few outlets still operating there ahead of a 2021 deadline to move out before the block gets demolished under the Selective En bloc Redevelopment Scheme.

Dr Lily Neo, 65, the general practitioner and an MP of 22 years, will be moving her clinic to Royal Square Medical Suites in Novena, where it will open next Monday with a new name: Lily Neo Clinic.

Save for a few goodbye photos and some last-minute packing, her last day at the clinic – which helped her earn her stripes as an MP and speak up with conviction in Parliament on issues such as community health screening and public assistance – went by just like any other day.

"It's too sad to try to do anything special," she told The Straits Times. "There is a sense of neighbourliness here that would be a pity to lose."

When plans to redevelop the neighbourhood were first announced in 2014, Dr Neo and shopkeepers in Tanglin Halt Road had hoped to move with the residents to nearby Dawson.

But as the rent there hovers at a market rate of close to $15,000 – much higher than the $3,000 or so she now pays – Dr Neo decided to move to Novena, where she will share clinic space with her gynaecologist husband Ben Neo.

This will allow her to save on rent and keep her fees at the same rates for her patients from Tanglin Halt, she said. A consultation plus medication, after subsidies from the Community Health Assist Scheme (Chas) which will still apply to her new clinic, will cost about $10.

It was a decision made with a heavy heart, said Dr Neo, who from time to time digs into her own pocket to pay for her patients' medicine. Some patients who are weaker or have mobility issues might be unable to see her again.

A patient cried when she broke the news to him. Another baked her a cake in the shape of a heart. "She said, this is my heart, I won't be able to see you again," recalled Dr Neo.

HEARTFELT

She said, this is my heart, I won't be able to see you again.

DR LILY NEO, on a patient who baked her a cake in the shape of a heart. The decision to move the clinic was made with a heavy heart, said Dr Neo. Some patients who are weaker or have mobility issues might be unable to see her again.

CARING

Some doctors will talk to you very haughtily and don't want to answer if you have extra questions. But Dr Neo is different. She will always listen to me and assure me if I have some condition I'm worried about.

MS ANG HONG ENG, 83, a retired supermarket packer who has been seeing Dr Neo for the past three decades.

SEEING ISSUES THROUGH HER PATIENTS' EYES

Since becoming an MP in 1997, Dr Neo, who is now with Jalan Besar GRC, has been running the clinic only in the mornings, and sees over 20 patients a day. Today, she is the only GP among Singapore's parliamentarians.

With her easy manner and ability to switch effortlessly between English, Mandarin, Malay, Hokkien and a smattering of Teochew and Cantonese, it is no wonder she is popular with her patients.

"Some doctors will talk to you very haughtily and don't want to answer if you have extra questions. But Dr Neo is different," said retired supermarket packer Ang Hong Eng, 83, who has been seeing Dr Neo for the past three decades. "She will always listen to me and assure me if I have some condition I'm worried about."

Dr Neo's time at Tanglin Halt Clinic, located in a greying neighbourhood populated with low- to lower-middle-income families, including some in rental flats, has made her one of the People's Action Party's (PAP) most popular backbenchers today.

She has consistently pulled in well over 70 per cent of the vote share in her Kreta Ayer-Kim Seng ward in the past four general elections, said a party activist. Not bad for someone once dismissed as a "tai-tai MP". During the last GE in 2015, the PAP team in Jalan Besar GRC scored 67.7 per cent.

The clinic has shaped her concerns over five terms in Parliament.

After seeing patients not able to make a complete recovery from breast cancer because of late diagnoses, she was prompted to speak up about the high cost of breast cancer screenings for women in 2001, in a clash that led to then Health Minister Lim Hng Kiang coming up with an infamous rebuttal that was later slammed: Women needed only to save money spent on one hairdo to pay for breast scans.

It eventually led to a subsidised rate at polyclinics a year later.

Patients have confided in Dr Neo that they did not want to go to hospital for treatments as they did not want to burden their children with big bills. Some said they stinted on medicine for chronic conditions.

Progress has been made on such issues over the years. For instance, the introduction and extension of schemes such as Chas and MediShield Life have provided better cover for medical bills.

"Being on the ground to see and feel these things happening gives you the passion and conviction to bring them up in Parliament," said Dr Neo.

RETIRING FROM POLITICS?

Dr Neo hopes that she can open her new clinic for longer hours to accommodate patients who need more time to travel from Tanglin Halt to Novena.

But when it comes to her political career, she hints that it may be time for her to step back. After Punggol East MP Charles Chong, who entered politics in 1988, she is the longest-serving backbencher together with Bukit Panjang MP Teo Ho Pin.

Would she retire before the next general election, which is due by April 2021? The grandmother of five – aged between two and seven – confesses that she had already thought about doing so two parliamentary terms ago.

"Backbenchers usually stay on for three terms, but this is already my fifth term. As a politician, I've overstayed my terms," she said.

It is a sentiment she has already made known to her colleagues in the PAP, she said. "But I will still like to continue with my medical practice. Medicine has always been my first love, and I took it up as I wanted to be more useful in life."

yuensin@sph.com.sg





Indian expo kicks off with lion dance

Four-day event at Suntec showcases products linked to India's art, culture and tradition



Several stalls at the Singapore International Indian Expo offer apparel, handicraft, jewellery and decorative items. There is also a World Wildlife Fund booth at the event.
ST PHOTOS: KELVIN CHNG

Amrita Kaur

The ninth edition of the Singapore International Indian Expo (Siiexpo) opened yesterday to the beats of Chinese drums and a lion dance performance, a surprising and unlikely occurrence at an Indian-centric event.

The auspicious and celebratory sounds reverberated throughout Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre's exhibition halls 403 and 404 when shoppers thronged the stalls as soon as the doors were thrown open yesterday morning. There were performances by Maya Dance Theatre, the Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society and Apsaras Arts.

The four-day event runs till Sunday, and entry is free.

In his address to dignitaries and visitors, India's High Commissioner to Singapore Jawed Ashraf said the products at the Siiexpo bear the unmistakable stamp of India and are intrinsically linked to the country's art, culture and tradition. He noted that it is a "particularly special year" as India celebrates its 70th Republic Day tomorrow and commemorates Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary.

He added that the industries represented at the Siiexpo have a "very special place in India".

"They constitute nearly 48 per cent of India's exports and, while headlines are being grabbed by big corporations in India, the real hard work of pushing exports from India belongs to the small exporters, the small and medium-scale industries, the village industry, the agro-products and artisans who work with their traditional skills," said Mr Ashraf.

$40

Price of ticket to attend a talk by life coach Gaur Gopal Das tomorrow at hall 405. Tickets are available at https://gaurgopaldas.eventbrite.sg



The event at Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre's exhibition halls 403 and 404 opened yesterday to the beats of Chinese drums and a lion dance performance. The expo runs till Sunday and entry is free.

At this year's Siiexpo, there are several stalls offering apparel, handicraft, jewellery and decorative items.

Among the booths are Artisans (Chennai) offering artefacts, Tanjore paintings and bronze statues; Rajasthani Village selling handmade shoes and block-print fabrics; and Ethnic Handcraft from Gujarat selling handmade jewellery, table runners, cushion covers and bags.

Ms Anjali Saxena, who was shopping at the event with a friend, said she got to know about Siiexpo through advertisements.

"It's amazing that shoppers can get a variety of goodies exclusive to different states in India all under one roof. We have bought stoles, purses and earrings," the 39-year-old said.

Visitors can also try their hand at using Rotimatic, a fully automated roti-maker at the Zimplistic booth.

The young can play games at the World Wildlife Fund booth and learn about the non-governmental organisation's wildlife conservation efforts.

Renowned life coach Gaur Gopal Das will give a talk tomorrow at hall 405. Tickets, priced at $40, are available at https://gaurgopaldas.eventbrite.sg.

The event is is organised by Singapore Press Holdings newspapers tabla! and Tamil Murasu and events company De Ideaz. It was inaugurated by SPH deputy chief executive Anthony Tan.

amritak@sph.com.sg

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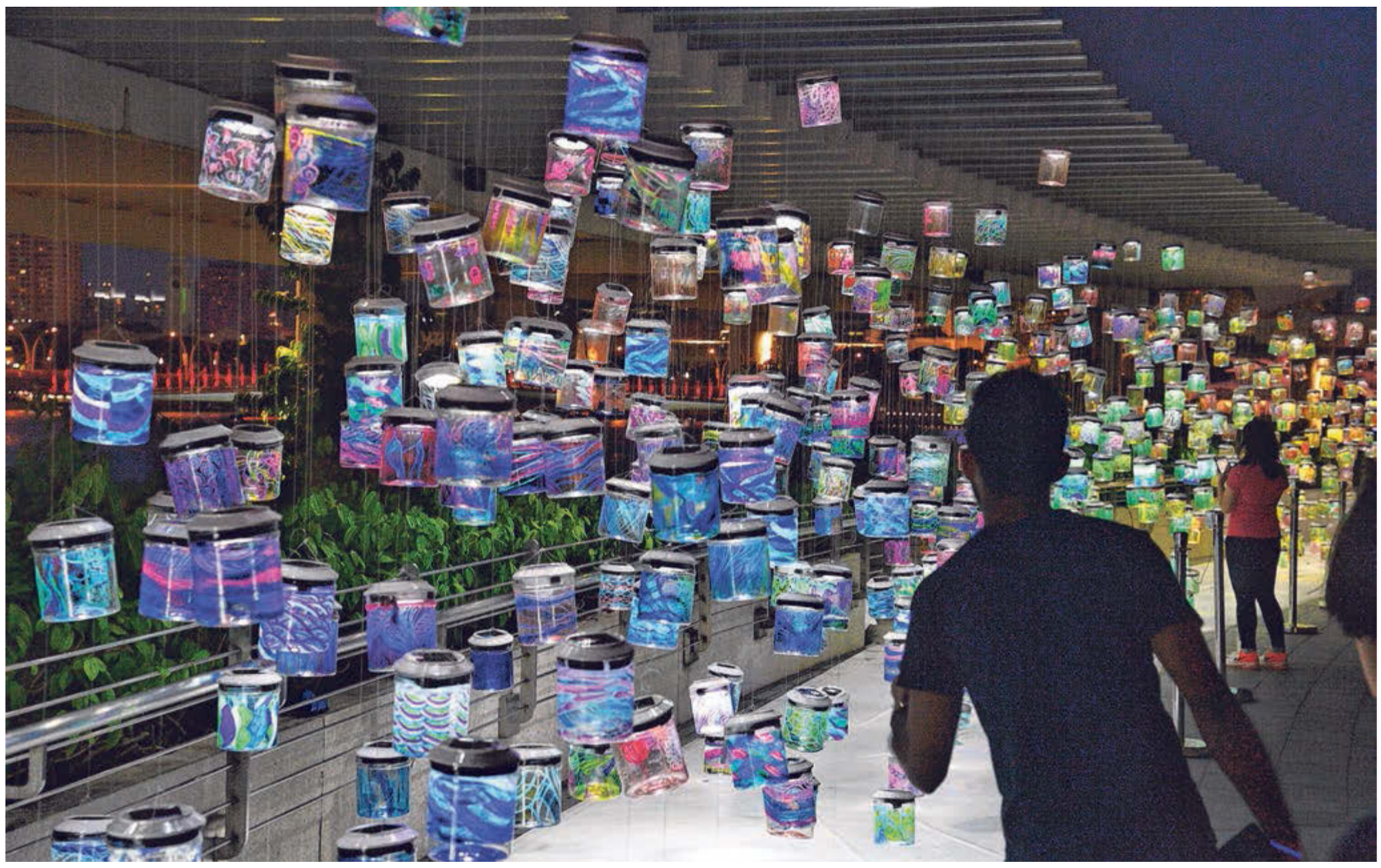
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Lee Siew Hua
Travel Writer,
The Straits Times







The Rainbow Connection (left)

WHAT:
This installation was created by Singapore industrial designer Lee Yun Qin in collaboration with members of the community. It features solar light modules – upcycled cookie containers combined with solar lights – which sway in the wind to form a shifting prismatic projection on the ground.

WHERE:
Marina Bay Sands trellises

Shadows Exposed (below)

WHAT:
Walk in front of a large screen stretched along Mist Walk, and your shadow will reveal images from Singapore through the ages, in this installation by Korean-American artist and film-maker Judy K. Suh and Chicago-based arts technology company Visual Feeder.

WHERE:
Mist Walk (next to Red Dot Design Museum)

ST PHOTOS: DESMOND WEE

Take journey of light across Bridges Of Time

33 artworks along i Light festival route will mark S'pore's development, kick off bicentennial celebrations

Toh Wen Li

A ghostly, shimmering 19th-century boat docked in Marina Bay will greet passers-by from next week.

This holographic art installation, part of the upcoming i Light Singapore – Bicentennial Edition festival, was inspired by the sampan panjang (long dwelling boat) used by the orang laut sea nomads, and its racing boat variations.

The public will be able to see Sails Aloft from The Promontory and Mist Walk near the Marina Bay waterfront.

Depending on the wind and the angle from which it is viewed, there might be one, two, four or even six boats neck and neck.

"The artwork itself isn't tangible, yet it does work as a sculpture," said Mr Mihai Baba, one of two artists from Estonia-based Biangle Studio who created the installation.

It is one of 33 artworks that will go on display next week as part of the annual i Light festival, which runs from next Monday to Feb 24.

The sustainable light art festival, previously known as i Light Marina Bay, has been organised by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) since 2010 to add vibrancy to the Marina Bay precinct and encourage sustainable lifestyles.

Last year's festival drew two million visitors.

This year, on display are sustainable light art installations and a multimedia show, created by artists from 15 countries, including Singapore.

The festival, which kicks off island-wide bicentennial activities to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the arrival of Sir Stamford Raffles, will expand beyond the usual Marina Bay area to include the Civic District, Singapore River and Raffles Terrace at Fort Canning Park.

In keeping with this year's festival theme, Bridges Of Time, artworks will be installed on six bridges at the Singapore River and Marina Bay area – Elgin Bridge, Cavenagh Bridge, Anderson Bridge, Esplanade Bridge, Jubilee Bridge and The Helix bridge.

Aside from the artworks, there will be more than 20 programmes for the public, such as music performances, upcycling workshops and the Prudential Marina Bay Carnival.

Festival director Jason Chen, who is also URA's director for place management, said: "This special edition is especially meaningful as it forms part of the Singapore Bicentennial commemoration. The artwork line-up collectively reflects the festival's desire to bridge people, cultures and ideas through art and sustainability.

"The light art installations will be strategically placed along the festival route to (take) everyone on the development journey of Singapore since the arrival of its earliest communities at the Singapore River."

tohwenli@sph.com.sg





Cenotaph For A Stone

WHAT:
This reinterpretation of the Singapore Stone – a slab of sandstone from a boulder that was blown up in 1843 to widen the mouth of the Singapore River – consists of 51 "rock fragments" on steel pedestals. The 52nd pedestal has been left empty, hinting at the piece that now resides in the National Museum of Singapore. Cenotaph For A Stone, which won the inaugural i Light Student Award, was created by National University of Singapore students Bryan Joseph Cadag, Loo Quan Le and Zulkarnain Mohd Zin.

WHERE:
Waterboat House Garden, Fullerton Road



Facey Thing

WHAT: As passers-by get in range of the camera, facial tracking will identify their faces and blow them up on the screen. As they move closer to the screen, they can "paint" their faces virtually. This interactive artwork was designed by New Zealand-based Uji Studios.

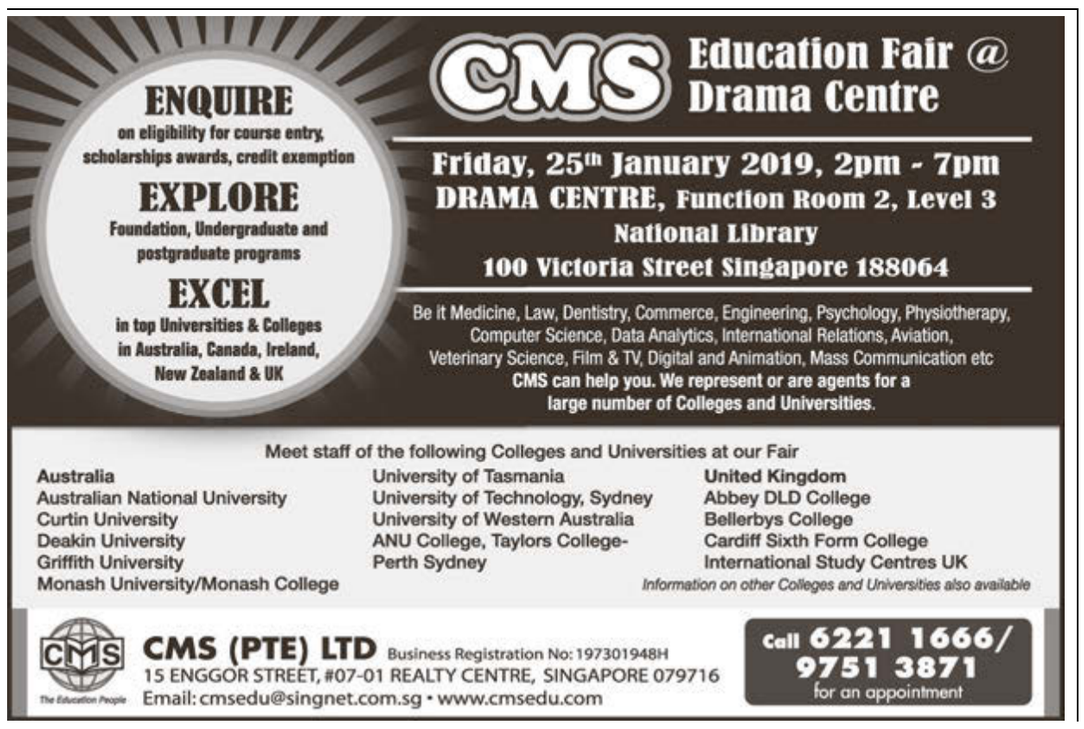
WHERE: Marina Bay Waterfront Promenade



With A View

WHAT: Parallel mirrors in the shape of shophouse windows are part of this installation by Singapore creative design agency Superiore Design Associates. This creates a series of smaller and smaller reflections that seem to recede infinitely into the distance.

WHERE: River Promenade alongside Parliament House



Posting results for secondary students out next Thursday

Graduating secondary school students will receive their posting results for this year's Joint Admissions Exercise (JAE) from 9am next Thursday, the Ministry of Education (MOE) announced yesterday.

The posting results will be sent by SMS and made accessible on the JAE website.

Students posted to Millennia Institute (MI) or a junior college (JC) must report to those institutions at 7.30am the following day.

Those posted to a polytechnic or an Institute of Technical Education (ITE) course will receive further instructions in an enrolment package that will be mailed to them.

The MOE said applicants who wish to appeal for a transfer to another JC should approach the JC of their choice directly. "The JC has the discretion to consider the application if it has available vacancies, and if the applicant meets its course cut-off point for this year's exercise," said the ministry.

Applicants who wish to appeal for a transfer to MI should also approach the institute directly.

Those who wish to appeal for a transfer to another polytechnic or ITE Higher Nitec course can do so online, through the JAE Online Appeal Portal.

Students not posted to any course during the JAE are encouraged to submit an appeal through the same portal, between 9am next Thursday and 4pm on Feb 7.

The appeal outcomes will be released on Feb 21 at noon.

Jolene Ang

New app helps pre-diabetics check their food

Users can see how healthy their meals are and set weight loss goals

Rei Kurohi

Not everyone you see taking photos of their food before eating it may be doing it for Instagram likes.

Some may be pre-diabetic patients from Ng Teng Fong General Hospital checking how healthy their meals are.

The hospital has teamed up with artificial intelligence (AI) experts from the National University of Singapore (NUS) to develop a new application for people diagnosed with pre-diabetes, a condition where blood glucose levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be classified as diabetes.

The JurongHealth Food Log (JHFoodLg) app uses AI to match photos of food to a database of more than 200 common local dishes – including nasi padang, laksa and char siew rice – and utilises nutrition data from the Health Promotion Board, JurongHealth Campus and the Australian Food and Nutrient Database.

Professor Ooi Beng Chin, from the school of computing at NUS, said: "The system learns dynamically whenever a new photo is uploaded, so it will get even better at recognising the food over time."

The app also allows users who are part of the hospital's Lifestyle Intervention (Liven) programme to set weight loss and exercise goals.

Figures from 2017 show that more than 400,000 Singaporeans have diabetes, while another 430,000 have pre-diabetes and are at risk of developing diabetes.

The hospital's principal dietitian Jesslyn Chong said patients with pre-diabetes can reverse it by losing 5 to 7 per cent of their body weight.

Results from a six-month study have been promising. Almost all of the 20 patients who used the app, while taking part in the Liven programme, lost between 4 and 5 per cent of their initial body weight.

Many were overweight or borderline overweight before enrolling in the programme.

"Our programme helps our participants set realistic health goals such as losing half a kilogram of weight per week. The app also helps to remind them of their goals and motivate them," said Ms Chong.

During the study, dietitians and physiotherapists at the hospital monitored the patients' progress and gave them weekly feedback via scheduled live chat sessions in the app.

The app's developers say users can track their meals through a "food diary" which records nutrition information like calories, fat, carbohydrates and sugar content.

They can also manually adjust the recorded portion sizes if they have eaten more or less than a standard serving. The total daily calories consumed and burned are displayed on the app's dashboard.



The new JurongHealth Food Log app uses AI to match photos of food to a database of more than 200 common local dishes. ST PHOTO: REI KUROHI

Exercise activity data from fitness trackers can also be synchronised with the app.

Besides sharing their progress with their healthcare providers, users can also share photos on the app's community page, which is modelled after Instagram.

The app is currently available only to participants in the Liven programme, but the hospital plans to release it to the general public.

However, only patients in the Liven programme will have access to the health coaching provided by the hospital's dietitians and physiotherapists. The public will be able to use the food diary and fitness tracking features when the app is made available.

Meanwhile, the study group will be expanded to a total of 140 participants, said the hospital's director of allied health and community operations Lee Hee Hoon. The research programme is expected to be completed in about six months.

Ms Lee said: "We believe that everyone can benefit from this app for self-monitoring, not just people with pre-diabetes.

"Other chronic diseases can also be controlled primarily through lifestyle and behavioural changes.

"The user's personal values and sense of purpose have to anchor and sustain those changes."

rei@sph.com.sg

Man collected $1m for syndicate in scam

A man admitted in court yesterday that he had collected cash for an international syndicate behind a ruse that duped a retiree into handing over more than $5 million.

In November 2017, Looi Yu Chong, a Malaysian, collected over $1 million from the Singaporean woman who was swindled in a police impersonation scam.

Others connected to the syndicate took the remaining amount. Looi, 21, pleaded guilty in court yesterday to one count of dealing with the benefits of criminal activities totalling more than $655,000.

A second similar charge involving $500,000 will be taken into consideration during sentencing.

The court was told that on Nov 7, 2017, the woman received a phone call from someone from "Chinatown police station" who introduced herself as Yang Hai Ping. Yang told the retiree that she was a suspect in a "criminal case". The victim was given a so-called case number.

The call was then transferred to a man, Lei Ping, who directed the retiree to a fake Singapore police website which the syndicate had created. Deputy Public Prosecutor Suhas Malhotra said that when the woman keyed in her "case number" on the fake website, she saw a "warrant" for her arrest on suspicion of money laundering.

Lei Ping then told the retiree that her case would be handled by a "chief police officer" known as Chen Kan.

She later received a phone call from Chen Kan, who told her that the investigation would last seven days and that she would eventually be given documents to sign stating that she was "not guilty". Chen Kan also told her to give him the details of her bank accounts and she complied.

After this, on 11 occasions, he told her to deliver cash withdrawn from her accounts to people purportedly from the Chinese government. She was told that she would be assisting the police in a money-laundering investigation.

The retiree complied out of fear and handed the money to different people, including a 58-year-old sales promoter who was also duped by the syndicate.

DPP Malhotra said that Looi received more than $1 million of the retiree's money from the sales promoter in Singapore on Nov 16 and 17, 2017.

Looi was arrested by the Royal Malaysian Police on Jan 16 last year. He is expected to be sentenced today. Two others involved in the scam, Goh Kok Keong and Khoo Chun Hean, are still at large.

Shaffiq Alkhatib

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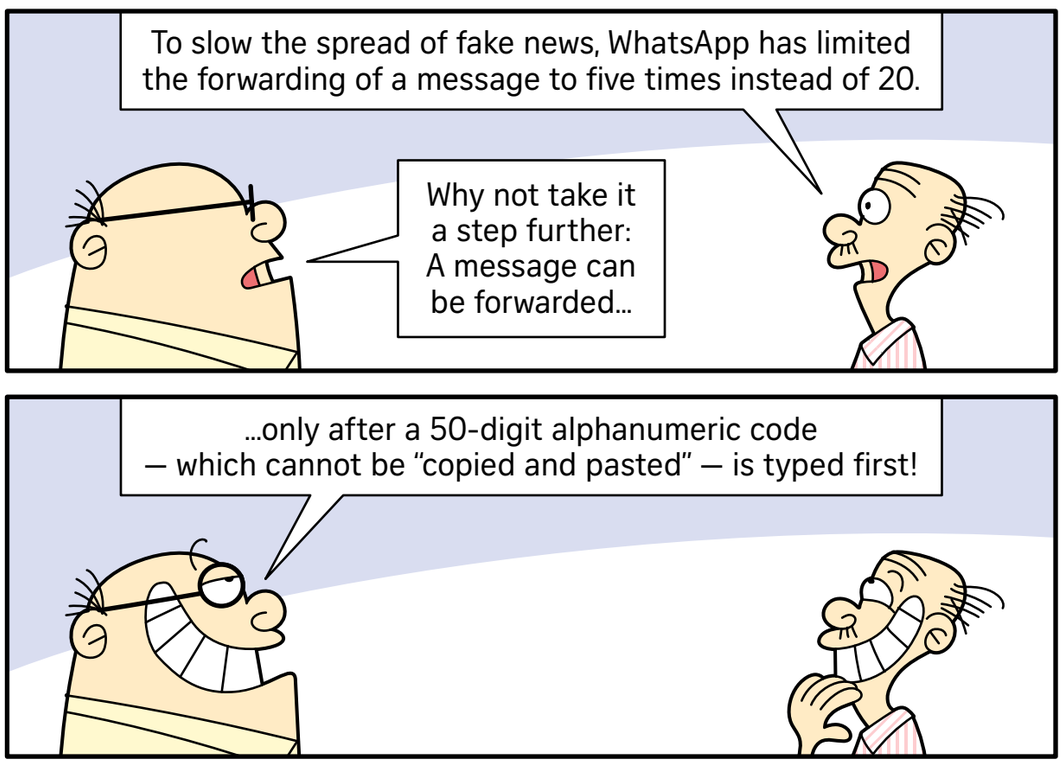
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FORUM

Cheecheow's take



Look hard at training rules in SAF

I am sure many people in Singapore are saddened to hear of the death of Mr Aloysius Pang in a military exercise (Actor injured in SAF exercise in New Zealand dies; Jan 24).

Another Singaporean son has been taken away while fulfilling his duties, protecting his nation.

This time, the soldier is an operationally ready national serviceman (NSman), someone who had taken leave of absence from his work and loved ones to don the green uniform.

While there has been much speculation surrounding the incident that led to his injury and death, one point kept surfacing in conversations – safety.

Is it time for the Singapore Armed Forces to call for an extensive review of the Training Safety Regulations (TSRs)?

TSRs exist so that servicemen can follow them and operate in a safe environment.

However, in many incidents, it appears that TSRs may not have been followed. If that was the case, why not?

Many questions need to be answered.

Serving and protecting this nation of ours is a privilege, but let's make it a safer one. Let's review all TSRs and take steps to ensure that they are followed.

No one should return in a coffin while serving and protecting his nation in peace time.

Roy Ong Ban Guan

Have memorial to remember soldiers who die in service

On Wednesday night, another Singaporean son lost his life while serving his country (Actor injured in SAF exercise in New Zealand dies; Jan 24).

His personal sacrifice, like those before him, has undoubtedly touched the hearts of many Singaporeans.

No amount of words and gestures can take away the pain his loved ones must be feeling.

Military service, by its very nature, involves danger and risk. I don't think we can have a strong and credible military if we take out the realism of military training and exercises.

However, operationally ready and full-time national servicemen are not volunteer professional soldiers.

They are normal citizens called upon by their nation to perform military service in order to protect the country and its people.

Thus, no expense should be spared to ensure that they are kept safe.

The Minister for Defence and commanders in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) must put safety as top priority in not just words but also credible and effective actions.

Despite all the outpouring of grief and the best efforts of the SAF, we know that Mr Aloysius Pang will not be the last person to make the ultimate sacrifice in the name of national defence.

As we celebrate the nation's achievements, peace and prosperity, we must not forget the sacrifices that were made to get us to where we are today.

After more than 50 years of national service, how many of our national service soldiers have lost their lives?

Do we still remember their names, their life stories and their unfulfilled dreams?

As we celebrate the nation's achievements, peace and prosperity, we must not forget the sacrifices that were made to get us to where we are today.

It is time for Singapore to build a memorial to recognise the national servicemen who lost their lives during service.

Their names must be permanently etched on a memorial and on our minds.

As long as Singapore is a sovereign country and the memorial stands, the names of all the men who made the ultimate sacrifice should never be forgotten.

Tew Woon Chong

Actor gave his life for his country

The death of Mr Aloysius Pang saddens the whole nation and I struggle as I write to extend my deepest condolences to his family and loved ones.

As we grieve, let us ponder over the higher purpose of what Mr Pang, who served with such distinction, was doing.

He would not want us to decry the purpose of national service as some would in times like this.

Singapore is a jewel shining with success, much to the envy of many.

Sons like Mr Pang ensure the nation is to be treated with respect and equal standing.

Our national servicemen make Singapore strong and show that it is not there for the taking.

Given the opportunity to contribute to his epitaph I would stand and shout: "Here lies a true and talented son who gave his life for Singapore's defence."

Wong Bheet Huan

FORUM ONLINE

1. **STEVE TAN:** Committed to transforming security officers' jobs
2. **V. BALU:** Live music lifted mood of this year's Thaipusam procession

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Colonisation didn't crush Singapore's fighting spirit

Mr Richard Copus rationalised colonisation when he said, among other things, that "Britain has no problems looking up to its former colony as a role model, and surely Singapore likewise should have few qualms about retaining the memory of Raffles" (Recognise S'pore's history as part of its present; Jan 23).

Colonisation can never be justified and Singapore cannot regard Britain as a role model because it was the coloniser that subjugated the island and used the land, labour and other assets to extend its economic and political influence in Asia.

Whatever Britain did for Singapore was primarily to protect and advance its interests in trade, commerce, banking, insurance, plantation and mining concessions, and other mercantile pursuits which were dominant at that time.

The British profited enormously from their 140-year rule of Singapore. Locals got the short end of the stick, like low-level education, and shortages in housing, jobs, medical care and other necessities of life.

The first tertiary institution, a medical school, came only in 1905 and a national university was officially established in 1949, over 100 years after Raffles landed.

Locals were barred from working in the Straits Settlements Civil Service until the 1900s.

Do all these make Britain a role model?

Nevertheless, colonial rule did not crush our fighting spirit and we built Singapore from a Third World colony into an independent First World nation using our own model.

Yes, colonisation is a chapter in our history, but as Mr Pierre Trudeau, the 15th Canadian prime minister once said: "The past is to be respected and acknowledged, but not to be worshipped."

Particularly our colonial past, I might add, and Raffles was not the star of the show.

Anthony Oei

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Excerpts from readers' letters

INSPIRING PASSION FOR SPORTS

Reading about former national swimmer May Ooi, one would be hard-pressed to not feel inspired (MMA: May Ooi calls time on combat sports, Jan 10).

Ooi's narrative is also an excellent example of how individuals with domain expertise and rich experiences who have arrived at their lives' crossroads can reskill and repurpose themselves to continue to contribute to society. This dovetails with calls by the Government encouraging workers to transform themselves to be future economy-ready.

I have no doubt that Ooi will continue to help elevate Singapore sports to new heights.

Woon Wee Min

HOLD MEGA LION DANCE EVENT

In celebrating Singapore's bicentennial, I suggest that the organising committee has an event with 200 lions from local lion troupes prancing around the civic district or on the Floating Platform.

Alternatively, a competition could be held at the National Stadium, with troupes from the world over invited to take part. Singapore is after all the Lion City.

Jason Neo Tiang Nee

ASSIST PATIENTS WITH TOILET USE

One reason patients hate staying in hospitals is the need for them to use diapers even when they are in control of their bowel and bladder functions. It is humiliating and sheer torture for them.

Hospital management should deploy healthcare attendants to the wards with the aim of assisting such patients to use the toilets.

Tan Chek Wee (Dr)

WORK-LIFE BALANCE LACKING

I am surprised at the heavy penalties levied on security officers caught sleeping on duty (Stiffer penalties aim to deter unprofessional conduct; Jan 15).

A fair number of security officers are in their 50s and 60s, and are required by necessity to work long hours, with short rest days and annual leave. It is not surprising that they face the problem of fatigue. Though legislation has been passed to raise the professionalism of security officers, not much has been done to mitigate their work-life balance.

Chew Chee Weng

Plain water is key in diabetes war

I believe that imposing sugar taxes should be the last resort. Prior to that, we need to explore other measures to cut sugar intake (Sugar tax to change behaviour, not boost revenues; Jan 20).

Sugar is not the only cause of diabetes. There are other risk factors in people's lifestyle that raise the odds of having diabetes.

Among the four proposed measures from the Ministry of Health, banning the sale of higher sugar pre-packaged drinks is effective. Banning advertisements, mandatory nutrition labelling and taxing manufacturers are passive restraints. They do not effectively reduce risks from other sources like eating processed meat, high-fat daily products and sweets.

Higher prices for pre-packaged sugar drinks do not help the low-income groups and office workers because they have few alternatives apart from buying expensive bottled water or sweet beverages in eating places.

To fight diabetes, public education is necessary to explain how to keep obesity and diabetes at bay, via multimedia platforms.

We should promote consuming plain water.

Water should be the first choice of beverage because it contains no carbohydrates or calories.

Perhaps it is necessary to progressively introduce the mandatory installation of drinking fountains at public places and hawker centres to encourage people to switch.

Most people would switch when plain water is readily available.

For the long-term good of Singapore, it is worthwhile for the Ministry of Health and the food industry to sacrifice some profits to provide drinking fountains to boost healthy living.

Paul Chan Poh Hoi

Measures in place to reduce impact on environment

We refer to the report (Dispute over key findings of Tengah environmental study; Jan 12).

The Housing Board is committed to reducing the environmental impact of its development works at Tengah.

Even before development started, HDB engaged an independent consultant to carry out an environmental study to document the conditions of the site.

The study found that most of the current vegetation in Tengah is from abandoned plantations, scrublands, and young secondary forests that comprise mostly non-native plants. These provide habitats for native animals.

Following the study, HDB created a town plan with features that will support a rich biodiversity within Tengah.

About 20 per cent of Tengah town – approximately 140ha – will be set aside for green spaces.

This includes a 50ha forest corridor that will be retained to provide a habitat for plants and animals, and will allow wildlife to move between the Western Catchment and Central Catchment Nature Reserve.

Native plants will also be reintroduced to enhance this corridor.

A naturalised stream that will run through part of the central park in the town will provide a lush home for native aquatic plants and animals.

Before any development works start, wildlife will be guided away from the site to nearby forests.

Plants of conservation value will be salvaged, and trees where birds are nesting will also be temporarily retained.

HDB has been engaging nature groups on the plans for Tengah, and sharing with them the findings from the environmental studies.

We will continue with these engagements, and will work with all stakeholders to fine-tune the plans for Tengah.

Chong Fook Loong (Dr)
Group Director (Research and Planning)
Housing & Development Board

Biodiversity built into urban setting

We refer to the letter (Irony of building 'forest town' after clearing forests; Jan 16).

The Government has taken, and will continue to take, into consideration Singapore's natural assets and biodiversity in planning for future land use.

This is why a significant part of our land area has been set aside as nature reserves, nature areas and parks, with measures in place to protect the identified nature reserves and nature areas.

As we develop, we will strive to enhance our green canopy cover, and maintain ecological connectivity as far as possible.

But given our land constraints, we also have to balance the competing demands for limited land, such as providing affordable public housing for Singaporeans.

One of our key planning strategies is to grow employment centres outside the Central Business District, and take jobs closer to homes.

As part of this, we are developing Tuas Mega Port, Jurong Lake District and Jurong Innovation District.

With more jobs created in these areas, we will also need more new housing in the west.

Hence the site in Tengah, which was previously used for military training, was zoned for residential use, for the purposes of developing a new HDB town.

This will allow more people to live closer to where they work, and reduce travel times between homes and workplaces.

Steps have been taken to mitigate the potential impact of the housing development works at Tengah.

We will continue to integrate greenery and biodiversity into our urban environment, while ensuring Singapore's land-use needs are met.

Adele Tan (Ms)
Group Director (Strategic Planning)
Urban Redevelopment Authority



PICTURE THIS



ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

The coast is clear

This aerial view of East Coast shows the low-rise private housing estates (foreground) and the high-rise apartments near the coastline. Beyond that, several ships dot the Eastern Anchorage.

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